

# Sikhs in the Eighteenth Century



Surjit Singh Gandhi

SIKHS IN THE  
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY  
Their Struggle for Survival and Supremacy



By the same Author :

*History of the Sikh Gurus*

*Struggle of the Sikhs for Sovereignty*

*Perspectives on Sikh Gurdwaras Legislation*

*Punjab under the Great Mughals*

# SIKHS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

*Their Struggle for Survival and Supremacy*

SURJIT SINGH GANDHI



SINGH BROS.

1999

SIKHS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY  
Their Struggle for Survival and Supremacy

*by*

SURJIT SINGH GANDHI

© Author

ISBN 81-7205-217-0

First Edition 1999

Price : Rs. 500-00

*Published by :*

Singh Brothers, Bazar Mai Sewan, Amritsar

*Typesetter :*

K.G. Graphics, 98, City Centre, Amritsar.

*Printer :*

Printwell, 146, Indl. Focal Point, Amritsar.

*Offering At the Lotus Feet*  
*of*  
*Guru Gobind Singh*  
*On the*  
*Birth Tercentenary of the Khalsa*

*Obeisance to my mentor  
late Dr. Inderjit Singh  
who introduced me to the House Beautiful  
of Sikh History*



# CONTENTS

|                  |    |
|------------------|----|
| —Acknowledgments | 9  |
| —Preamble        | 11 |

## A VIOLENT RESPONSE ESTABLISHMENT OF SIKH STATE

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| 1. Banda Bahadur   | 25  |
| 2. Abdus Samad Khan  | 75  |
| 3. Zakariya Khan   | 88  |
| 4. Yahiya Khan and Shah Nawaz Khan and<br>Sikh Movement      | 128 |
| 5. Muin-ul-Mulk (Mir Mannu)                                  | 172 |
| 6. Mughlani Begam  | 198 |
| 7. Punjab under Timur Shah                                   | 216 |
| 8. Adina Beg and Maratha Supremacy<br>in the Punjab          | 229 |
| 9. Dissolution of Maratha Paramountcy<br>in the Punjab       | 249 |
| 10. Sikh-Afghan Contest for the Sovereignty<br>of the Punjab | 270 |
| 11. The Conquest of Sirhind Province                         | 280 |
| 12. Sikh-Afghan Contest                                      | 297 |

## MISL POLITY AND ORGANISATION

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| 13. Misl Polity and Organisation                                   | 327 |
| 14. The Sikh Misls   | 387 |
| 15. Sikh Principalities in the later half of<br>Eighteenth Century | 516 |
| 16. The Sikhs and Indo-Gangetic Doab                               | 535 |
| 17. Shah Zaman's Invasions on Punjab                               | 582 |
| 18. Maratha-Sikh Relations   | 588 |
| 19. British Imperialism and the Sikhs                              | 612 |

## WHAT HAPPENED TO SIKHISM

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| 20. Sikh Heroism—Concept and Tradition               | 625 |
| 21. Martyrdom  | 638 |
| 22. Primacy of Golden Temple and Amritsar            | 649 |
| 23. Sikh Prayer                                      | 657 |
| 24. Political Ideals and Behaviour                   | 664 |
| 25. Configuration of Sikh Society                    |     |
| Emergence of New Caste Hierarchy                     | 675 |
| 26. Gurdwara   | 687 |
| 27. Sikh Religious Orders                            | 696 |
| 28. Land Tenures, their Impact on the State Policies | 703 |
| —Appendix-I  | 711 |
| —Appendix-II   | 713 |
| —Appendix-III  | 716 |
| —Bibliography  | 719 |
| —Index   | 727 |



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dealing with a stupendous work like the present one, the author makes no pretension to have gone the whole hog by himself. Help and guidance were sought with humility from many individuals as well as organisations.

First and foremost I would like to place on record my debt of gratitude to late Dr. Fauja Singh, the doyen of history of the Punjab who was kind enough to share with me the product of his investigative research. I can never forget Dr. Harbans Singh, Editor, *Encyclopedia of Sikhism*, for seeding and nurturing the idea of taking up the present study in my mind.

My special thanks are due to the highly innovative and abundantly creative S. Manjit Singh 'Calcutta' (Former Cabinet Minister, Higher Education and Languages, Punjab) for his unremitting support and help. Himself an eminent scholar of Sikh history and Sikh theology, his comments proved of immense inspirational value for impelling me to break fresh grounds and make indepth study of the hitherto untrodden labyrinths.

Highly imaginative and constructive, Jathedar Gurcharan Singh Tohra, President Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee, was a constant source of encouragement and help. It was because of him that I could sustain myself even under a lot of stress inherent in such stupendous works. I really owe a huge debt of gratitude to him. Earlier too, he inspired me to build the book, *Perspectives on Sikh Gurudwaras Legislation*.

Dr. Inderjit Singh, the founder and chief promoter of The Bank of Punjab and a great Sikh savant was a primal source of strength and inspiration behind this work. It was chiefly because of his persuasions and goadings that this work majored.

Dr. Ranbir Singh (now the Registrar Punjabi University), Dr. Jodh Singh, Dr. Balkar Singh, Dr. Balwant Singh Dhillon, Dr. Madanjit Kaur, Dr. Sukhdial Singh really deserve my heartfelt thanks for assisting me in more ways than one. My special thanks

are due to Dr. Kirpal Singh who is not only a pre-eminent scholar but also the one who is totally dedicated to the muse of history. He helped me in planning the format of the book and willingly made available to me his invaluable wealth of Persian manuscripts.

Dr. Kharak Singh and Brigadier Gurdip Singh of the Institute of Sikh Studies Chandigarh Punjab, the recent brilliant entrants into the world of history and Sikh theology were kind enough to place at my disposal their vast knowledge pertaining to eighteenth century Sikhs.

Equally grateful am I to professor Devinder Pal Kaur who has gone through the whole manuscript and has also improved its diction. I am grateful to Dr. Harjit Kaur, Principal Akal Degree College for Women, for supervising the type-script. I am also grateful to Principal Sivraj Kaur for assisting me in formulating certain political constructs.

My wife, Daljit Kaur, also deserves my thanks. Her positive outlook was a reassuring beacon even during my difficult periods.

I shall be failing in my duty if I do not express my sincerest thanks to my publishers, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, especially Gursagar Singh, a brilliant youngman for demonstrating an unswerving commitment to the book.

Sangrur - India  
March 2, 1999

SURJIT SINGH GANDHI

## PREAMBLE

On the 7th October, 1708, a hired Pathan assassin cut short the fabulously brilliant life of Guru Gobind Singh with a dagger thrust. The hired assassin represents the notion that brute force is used to snuff out the flame, and the dagger through which the brute force is realised, symbolises a violent impulse. It is a sign of the will to liquidate the non-conformist ideological challenge to the establishment represented by the Muslim ruling class, the Muslim religious leadership to which the Hindu Rajas and leaders of the Hindu orthodoxy were active allies. The death on the part of Guru Gobind Singh was not just an empirical fact, it symbolises a unique reality, at once conceptual and metaphysical.

The Sikh religion upto the times of Guru Gobind Singh had become a complete ideology drawing into its ambit and embrace all aspects of society and its constituents. It had developed its distinct organisational structure, clearly marked conceptual framework and value patterns. It built its distinctive theological system far different from what had been in vogue in different religions in its contemporary world. This system revolved around one and the only one God who was beyond time and space, permanent beyond the noose of death, self-enlightened and self-existent. In the scheme of the Gurus, theology was employed as an instrument of regeneration of the ungenerate both at individual and social levels. The Sikhs were exhorted to extricate themselves from the misplaced notions of recognising the viability of gods in the process of spiritual uplift and set themselves to develop faith in the unity of one God. They were further advised to develop cosmic outlook by reflecting upon the cosmos and its creator, God, who could not be circumscribed by such constructs as caste, race, region, clime and country etc. God being the central point in Sikh theology, the prevalent concepts of sainthood and Guru were rejected in favour of new ones. Sant was to be a person committed to the cause of truth and integration, always endeavouring to

promote and advance it. This type of theology obviously fitted in the conceptual framework of the moral and social order which the Gurus envisaged and wanted to build in the spatio-temporal universe.

The sociological structure, as it grew under the fostering care of Gurus, was also unique in its significance and in the type of thinking which lurked behind it. The summum bonum of this structure was to transform the 'little culture' into 'great culture', to create salubrious atmosphere to bring about rejuvenation of individuals and society. By 'little culture' we mean affiliations to caste system, Varan Ashram theory, tribalism, regionalism, superstitions, belief in sorcery, esoteric practices and totems etc. which are either divisive or debasive and by 'great culture' it is meant everything which integrates, purifies, harmonises and promotes the cause of moral order to take its shape on this earth. To this end, the Gurus set social ideals before his followers. The scarlet thread passing through each of the social ideals was the spirit of equality and belief that everyone could regenerate itself to be 'Gurmukh' a moral man in the image of God Himself, and thus was in a position to contribute to the establishment of the moral order in the world. In the Gurus' utterances recorded in Guru Granth Sahib, there is enough to support these two themes.

The Gurus, all through the period from Guru Nanak to the death of Guru Gobind Singh, made efforts to raise up institutions suited to their thought and value-patterns. In the language of sociology, these can be called 'Macro-social structures'. The most important of the institutions were 'Sangat', 'Guru ka Langar', 'Guru Granth Sahib', and 'Pilgrimage Centres'. All these institutions helped the Sikhs develop a particular type of psyche and a distinct socio-cultural ethos. The Gurus attached great importance to the setting up of Sangats, holy assemblies. These congregations were at first primarily concerned with religious devotion, although shortly after, secular functions began to be performed by them. Another institution, that of 'Guru ka Langar' (Free common mess) originated almost simultaneously with that of Sangat. It performed four-fold function. First, it imparted a secular dimension to the Sangat. Secondly, it added to the functional efficiency of the Sikh organisation. Thirdly, it translated the principle of equality into practice, making it obligatory for all people, whatever their status in life, to sit on the ground in a line and eat together. Fourthly, it served as an adhesive force among the followers of Sikhism.

The central Sikh scripture commonly known as 'Guru Granth', more than anything else, brought about changes in the outlook of the Sikhs. It culturised the minds in a manner that suited the general scheme of Sikhism. Sociologically speaking, it contributed immensely to the emergence of the Sikhs as a macro group with distinct stance. Since it embodied the hymns of the Gurus and all those persons conforming to their faith, it became object of reverence of the Sikh people as also the fount of the Sikh precepts. This idea was repeatedly and calculatingly instilled into the minds of the people by the Gurus and by all their adherents—so much so that the Gurus, while recognising reverence of the people for themselves, enjoined upon them to look upon the Word as contained in the *Adi Granth* as 'Guru'.

Another macro-social structure was the institution of the Guru. Throughout the development of Sikhism upto Guru Gobind Singh, Guru had been assigned a place of predominance. Guru Nanak in so many of his verses highlights this point. As a matter of fact, in Guru Nanak's system, the Guru formed the pivot on which everything else hinged. The disciple was asked to walk on the path of God, to remain ever content in His Will and His Commands. But in these matters, as in everything else, the Guru was to point out the right path; he was to interpret the will of God, and the commands of the Almighty were also to be issued forth through the medium of his ordinances. The Guru, therefore, was to be implicitly obeyed.

A natural consequence of such teachings was the unquestioning devotion of the Sikhs to their spiritual head. The implied faith in a common superior knit the Sikhs together like the soldiers of the regiment. The predominant personality of the Guru supplied a nucleus around which the Sikh Panth could gradually arise. Under the leadership of Sikh Gurus, the Sikhs evolved a sense of corporate unity. The syntax of the conceptual system of the Guru had three units; the Guru is God, he is the voice of God and he is the Word, the Truth of God. These three senses, in fact, are not different rather there is complete identification of apparently different senses as it is evident from the following :

"The word is Guru and the mind (which is focussed on it) is the disciple. By dwelling on the ineffable one, on Him, the eternal Guru-Gopal, I remain detached. It is only

through the Word that I dwell on Him and so through the Guru, the fire of Haumai is extinguished."

The passage quoted above from Sidh Gosht brings out this identity not just with the pronouncement that the word is the Guru but also with the reference to the Guru-Gopal, God Himself. The Sikh Gurus were the Gurus in the sense that they were the perfect personalities conveying only the truth; their persons in themselves were not Gurus. This fact the Gurus themselves brought home to the people by example and precept. It is stated in the Puratan Janam Sakhi that when Guru Nanak finally resolved to make Lehna his successor, he put five paisas before Guru Angad and fell down at his feet. In the Tikkai-Di-Var (The Coronation Ode), we are told that 'Guru Nanak, in bowing to Guru Angad, reversed the order of things thereby showing that, from the very beginning, the impersonal character of Guruship was recognised. The personality of the Guru was detached from the spirit of Guruship, which was to be regarded as one indivisible and continuous; the fact that the Name Lehna was changed to Angad must be regarded as equally significant. Speaking of the nomination of Angad to the Guruship, the Coronation Ode says, 'He had the same light, the same ways.....' This idea is stressed again and again in the Sikh writings. The Guruship was something apart from the personality of the Guru and this would explain how the successive Gurus could be regarded identical. This impersonal character of the Guru enabled Guru Gobind Singh to invest the Khalsa with the dignity of Guruship. In the Keshgarh assembly the Guru received baptism from five worthy Sikhs. When they were astonished at his proposal he said, "The Khalsa is the Guru and the Guru is the Khalsa. There is no difference between you and me. As Guru Nanak seated Guru Angad on the throne, so have I made you a Guru." The investing of Guruship on Khalsa was a unique step. It imparted to each individual of the Khalsa brotherhood, limitless confidence. It ensured democratic functioning of the Khalsa and their compactness. It also instilled into the members of Khalsa brotherhood, a distinct consciousness which made them assertive, self-confident and articulate. Apart from its being integrative it became denotative of the powerful bid to translate everything into reality which constituted Sikhism.

The Sikh people also had their centres of pilgrimage such as Harimandir Tarn Taran and Baoli at Goindwal etc. These social structures also went a long way in shaping the psychology of the



Sikhs as also to provide them with a new adhesive. They formed a great cementing force for the rising Sikh community. The Sikh Sangats from far and near were drawn towards their holy places. They visited whenever they could, some of them even making regular annual visits. During these visits the various Sangats had the opportunity not only of seeing the Holy Guru and having his blessing but also of coming into close contact with one another. Sewa (Service) and Simran (Meditation on Nām) were the two major constituents of the daily routine of the visiting Sikhs. In consequence, unbreakable bonds of union were forged which imparted solidarity and cohesion to the Sikh ranks, fused the far-flung and diverse units into a single well-integrated organisation.

The order of the Khalsa (on March 30, 1699) was another important feature of the Sikh religion. It was a crowning event of Guru Gobind Singh's life from the stand-point of both organisation and ideology. Organisationally, it completely eliminated mediators between the Guru and the Sikhs, for the Sikhs themselves in their collectivity were given the status of Guru. This mortally struck at the Masand system which had irretrievably degraded itself by following corrupt practices, and, no wonder, the tenth Guru publicly abolished it. Ideologically, the creation of the Khalsa aimed at a well-balanced combination of ideals of Bhakti and Shakti, of moral and spiritual excellence and militant valour or heroism of the highest order. The Khalsa was ushered in as an order of the people upholding a particular set of ideals and committed to establish a society based on Nām (Meditation on Nām), Kirt Karna (Honest creative labour) and Wand Chhakna (Sharing of the fruit of one's labour with others). It represented a distinct pattern wherein tribal and caste affiliations had no room, nor were the superstitions, demeaning ceremonies and empty rituals given any accretion. Besides this, it also became an instrument to promote the cause of Sikhism. In this context, the Khalsa was enjoined upon to act as a vanguard of the people desirous of treading the entire path of progress and was concerned at every bend on this road to defend the interest, not of different separate groups but of the people as a whole.

Sikh religion, apart from developing doctrines, social ideals, macro-social structures and the Khalsa commonwealth, gave to his followers a theory of struggle. The Gurus made 'struggle' as an integral part of Sikh metaphysical and theological and social systems. Nowhere in the ancient Indian Traditions this was done

so explicitly and so poignantly. God here was given the monorific of 'Asur Sanghar' (Smasher of tyrants), Guru Gobind Singh called Him—All Steel (Sarb Loh) and Dusht Daman (Killer of Tyrants). Guru Gobind Singh, while considering struggle as the basic thing, if the people want to forge ahead, lends it other dimensions so as to make it a concept and an ideal. He makes it clear that struggle must be made for righteousness as the only justification of the struggle. And by righteousness the Gurus meant everything that operates in such a way that the people are not bogged down and response to different problems does not take the form of indifference and passivity, rather it is positivistic, and forward-looking. Guru Gobind Singh, in fact, preached dialectics of 'righteousness'. According to him the upward march of mankind depended upon how righteousness as a force could operate. If it outdoes forces of unrighteousness, the society's progress is assured, and if it is otherwise, the society is doomed. Righteousness, in its turn, should be worked in the context of the society and its affairs.

Guru Gobind Singh, considering God as a smasher of the evil-minded and struggle as the pre-condition of progress of society, regarded the use of force in the struggle as legitimate. Against the background of this type of thinking, the use of weapon was also allowed. After all what is force? It is an extreme method of persuading someone. If any individual or group does not come round and obstructs the righteousness to prevail, the use of force is a moral compulsion.

Sikh religion, as it has been aforesaid, attracted many followers. As a matter of fact, the circumstances were congenial for this religion to strike its roots and grow. At that time, on the soil of India, encounter between two religions—Islam and Hinduism—had taken place, the phenomenon which caused various currents and counter-currents. The encounter did not result in the ushering in a process of establishing a higher level of civilization, rather it made the confusion worse confounded. The medieval Indian society presented a gloomy look. It had lost its elan vital without which no society has been able to respond to different challenges which it is bound to face from time to time. The Brahmins and others' whom the prevalent social structure had assigned the job of fashioning creative response to different challenges and to carry the masses along with them had ceased to play their historical role, rather they had circumscribed their



activities to safeguard, sustain and promote their own interests and naturally all their activities centered round this purpose. They created symbols, rites, traditions and religious and social precepts to shape the people's psyche to make them blindly follow them and used even force—force of social boycott and physical violence to achieve their aim. Such men who were to function as a creative vanguard, reduced themselves to dominant group alienated from the people whose interests they looked upon with gross indifference. They did not give lead to them when they were faced with new social, economic and religious challenges, with the result that the people became rudderless and began to toss over the waves of different challenges. They reacted to such a situation and tried to create a response outside the aforesaid dominant group. In this attempt, they threw up different responses. Some of the responses such as Nathism and Baulism etc. were retrogressive and repressive and thus they were socially detrimental. These gave a speculative philosophy unrelated to social problems and exhorting the people to withdraw within themselves only for themselves. The withdrawal within themselves as a part of the process of self-discipline is not bad but here in India, it was a withdrawal within one-self, never to come out to serve the society. More dangerous than these types of responses were those which recommended the life of abandon. A few notable examples of these were Vam Margis etc. A few responses were obviously good and useful, as, for instance, the response furnished by some of the Bhakti reformers, but even these were sporadic and incomplete attempts, could only vaguely be described to be comprehensive and touched only the periphery of different problems.

The society, bleeding profusely and suffering from crisis of faith, social disintegration, and sapping of the *elan vital*, had to suffer another challenge, this time from the Islamic society which established its political hegemony during the 12th and 13th centuries and had chosen to stay in India. The Muslims had a civilization of their own which had, at least, two points which were sure to attract the Indians; one was social equality and the other was the faith in the oneness of God and Brotherhood of mankind on the basis of social equality and social justice. Both these points were complementary to each other on social plane. Besides this, Islamic society had a distinct value-system and precept-system. Muslims adopted violent means to wipe off Hindu civilization. In the beginning their violence was more marked but later on, it

abated and became sporadic; but, whatever the age, the sense of antagonism to Hindu society did not vanish. The violence did not produce the desired result as it sometimes has done in some societies in the world. The violence having been considered a step to finish the Indians evoked struggle of existence where mutually antagonistic elements of Hindu society united and new era could not be ushered in. And the social tension continued to be the bane of the Indian society. The Islamic society also could not keep itself fit and healthy. The leaders of the people, with the lapse of time, alienated themselves from the general masses and reduced themselves to a group interested only in their individual welfare. The religion, the social laws and the state-power were all harnessed to buttress the aforesaid tendency. Naturally the Muslim masses were also thrown into the vortex of confusion. Once the creative group of the Muslim society changed itself into a dominant group who like their counterpart (Brahmins) in Hindu society, began to regard superstitions, traditions, symbols and rituals as necessary equipment to drill the people to follow them mutely. True, Sufis from amongst the Muslims tried to give solution to the problems, but unfortunately, they saw the affairs around themselves from the particularistic point-of-view of sustaining and expanding the Muslim society.

It fell to the Sikh religion to stimulate the people to acquire new high level of culture and civilization on the basis of integration of all the human beings without consideration of caste, creed, coat, birth and wealth and on the foundation of the belief in one God, honest creative labour and sharing of fruits thereof among themselves, and with others allowing no corner to threats, fear or coercion in the process of integration, of course with emphasis on fearlessness and democratic functioning and values. No wonder, the masses belonging to either Hindu society or the Muslim society or any other type began to be attracted towards Sikh religion. Wherever the message of Sikhism reached, it won converts. This factor caused reaction among the dominant group of the Muslims consisting of ruling class and the religious and economic aristocracy of the Muslim society. Similarly, the privileged classes of the Hindus who were also their natural leaders were cut to the quick at the alienation of the Hindu masses from them. The former started using state power to stifle Sikh religion to incapacitate it to induct a new lease of life as the latter on social plane started two-pronged attack on it by organising

naked opposition to it and giving new justification to their otherwise unjustifiable precepts and customs. The latter also extended their help to the former in their bid to arrest the growth of Sikhism. This attitude of the dominant groups of both the communities manifested itself in the execution of Guru Arjan Dev in the calculated attempts of Aurangzeb at breeding schism in Sikhism, and in the battles which the Sikhs had to fight since the times of Guru Hargobind, sometimes against the Mughal armies and sometimes against the combined forces of the Mughals and the Hill Rajas. The climax reached when Guru Gobind Singh was stabbed to death by a hireling. The dagger-thrust which finished Guru's life was, in fact, the symbol of the will to put an end to all that Guru Gobind Singh stood for; what was aimed at was not physical extinction of the Guru only. The death of the Guru was the manifestation of the determination to initiate the process of the regeneration of society at all costs by providing atmosphere to the society to create suitable response to the challenges. Thus it was a point of departure for the new mighty beginnings. The Sikh society responded to these challenges in a violent spirit of which Banda was the first manifestation. The longdrawn out struggle of the Sikhs which forms the corpus of this book is, in fact, the exposition of the new aspirations sparked off by the response as fashioned by the Sikhs. The Sikhs, to see their response successful, had to pass through many ups and downs, but they tenaciously stuck to their goals and did not bow to the forces of reaction, even in the face of the spectacle of their own destruction. They went on and on till they succeeded in generating progressive motion in the society.

No doubt the story of the struggle of the Sikhs is a continuum; yet for the sake of convenience, it has been compartmentalised into sections in the book, each section presenting a particular phase, roughly speaking. In the first section the violent response of which Banda Singh Bahadur was a spokesman has been discussed. The violence exhibited by the Sikhs was not a case of brutality, but it manifested determination to safeguard and implement Khalsa ideology at all costs. It was in this context indisputably that the Sikhs established Khalsa sovereignty—a first model of government and governance that was committed to ensure the welfare of all as also to reconstruct the society on the basis of Khalsa foundation.

In the second section, steps by the Mughal state power to

penalise and to snuff out the Sikhs have been critical juxtaposed against the background of political and social attitudes of the state and of the ruling class of Mughal religious elites. Ample light has been thrown on the determination of the Sikhs, never to buckle under never to swerve the chosen path. As it was in the case of the Zeus in Greek mythology, each programme of penalisation proved to be a stimulus for Sikhs to wage their struggle with greater vigour. Hence this part of the book bears a sectional heading such as Penalisation—March towards sovereignty.

The section also underscores the responses of the Sikhs at different levels—conceptual and organisational. Besides, the section launches a focussed study of the forces and concepts leading to the emergence and prominence of different institutions such as Sarbat Khalsa, Gurmata, Gurdwara, Dal Khalsa and Misl et al. How the institutions helped the Sikhs to frustrate the notorious designs, first of the Mughals then of the Afghans and Marathas. This aspect has also been dealt with appropriately.

In the next section Misl polity in all its aspects has been delineated bringing out very clearly and congenitly that it was different from either the Mughal type or that of the Afghans. It had its own uniqueness. The role of the ruler, his government and his governance as conceived by it was based on Sikh ideology whose three cornerstones were welfare of all irrespective of caste, creed, wealth, status and birth etc., guarantee of human rights to every one and perfect harmony among people.

Sikh kingship was neither monarchical nor oligarchical nor theocratical; it was an institution which derived its power from God and exercised it according to His Will for people who were His creation. To be a good ruling agent of God, Sikh ruler, therefore, acted according to the collective will of the people and was always committed to their welfare. He/she therefore had always notable inclination to consult the people through their agencies Panj Pyaras, Sarbat Khalsa which in turn were formed to follow the teachings of their Gurus.

Edged exploration has been conducted to identify the dynamism imparted by Sarbat Khalsa, Dal Khalsa, Gurmata and various other institutions apart from dwelling upon in their genesis, growth and formation. The concept and institution of Guru Panth played a distinguished role in shaping the destiny of the Sikhs apart from providing unique solidarity and programmatic designs to the Sikhs. This fact has also been brought into focus.

In addition, this section gives profiles of different Mislis, their process of formation, rise and their state on the verge of the rise of Ranjit Singh.

Last few chapters such as 'Sikhs and Marathas', 'The Inroads of The Sikhs into Indo-Gangetic Doab', 'The Sikhs and British Imperialism' describe Sikhs' activities beyond the frontiers of the Punjab.

The Sikhs' incursions into Delhi have been described and evaluated in terms of their ambitions and character of their struggle. Conclusion has been drawn that the Sikhs in undertaking such inroads were not actuated by any laudable objective. The Sikhs never entertained any dream of establishing All India Sikh Rule.

The last section entitled 'What happened to Sikhism' gives an account of Sikh Precepts, Sikh Religious Orders, Sikh Traditions and Political Behaviour of the Sikhs in the eighteenth century. The land tenure as a significant factor behind certain Sikh overtures and gestures has also been evaluated. The overall assessment of Sikhism has also been made. It has been brought out that all did not go well for Sikhism. The eighteenth century, indeed, was not a period of unmixed blessings. The institution of gurdwara fell into the hands of the Hindu priests or those who were nurtured in Hindu traditions with the result that the institution which not only educated the people in Sikh teachings but also presented an ideal way of life began to function like a Hindu temple and Sikhism was projected as only a part of Hinduism—at best its militant arm. 'SANGAT' as an institution was not allowed to play its destined part. Once again caste considerations began to stalk the Sikh society. New caste hierarchy came into being thereby harming the cause of the Panthic solidarity and its concept so assiduously nurtured by the Gurus. The Sikh Orders such as Udasis and Nirmalas also degenerated into the willing instruments of the forces spelling degeneration among the Sikhs. In the economic sphere too, when Sikhs came to settling down, they established themselves as a class of peasant-proprietors or as feudal chieftains—the development which clashed with the egalitarian spirit of Sikhism.



# **A VIOLENT RESPONSE**

**Establishment of Sikh State**





## Chapter 1

# BANDA SINGH BAHADUR<sup>1</sup>

Banda was born on October 27, 1670 at Rajauri in the Poonch district of western Kashmir. While a child, he was called Lachhman Dev. His father, Ram Dev, being Rajput ploughman, the boy had to do various odd jobs connected with farming which a peasant boy often does in a village. During his early years, it appears that he had attained high degree of efficiency in archery, swordsmanship and horse-riding. He also developed taste in hunting. At the age of fifteen, an incident is said to have occurred which changed the whole course of his life. In one of his hunting excursions, he shot a sharp arrow on the body of a female deer on the bank of the Tavi River. The deer bled profusely and died. The two young ones whom she was carrying also fell from her womb and writhed to death. The scene was too pathetic to bear and Banda resolved, thenceforward, to lead an ascetic's life. He became disciple of Janki Prashad, a Bairagi ascetic who resided at Rajauri. In accordance with the custom of the Bairagis he changed his name to Madho Das. Like the Sadhus of this order, he wandered from place to place until he came to Nasik on the bank of Godavari, where he entered the hermitage of an old yogi, Aughar Nath, and learnt occultism from him. Aughar Nath was much impressed by the service of Madho Das and as a token thereof he presented to him a rare yogic book, *Sidd Anunia*, compiled by a disciple of Guru Gorakh Nath. After his preceptor's demise, he moved to Nander (Maharashtra) and established a monastery of his own where he worked for fifteen years. It is here that Banda came in contact with Guru Gobind Singh who paid a visit to Nander, one of the religious centres of the central India, possibly to acquaint the religious leaders with his mission. From the chronology of the Guru's travels, it appears that he did not live more than one month in

1. After receiving 'Amrit', Guru Gobind Singh gave Madho Das a new name 'Banda Singh'. Epithet of Bahadur he earned because of his bravery.

Nander. During this short sojourn, according to Muhammad Latif, "Govind and Banda soon became intimate friends, and the former, by his persuasive eloquence and religious zeal, made such a deep impression on the mind of Banda that he was initiated into the Pahul and became a disciple of the Guru."<sup>1</sup> Soon, Banda won the Guru's confidence and became his most staunch adherent. The Guru found in him the fire for the Sikh cause, sincerity for upholding it and the capability to spearhead the Sikh Movement. After baptism, the Guru gave him a new name Banda Singh which the latter had himself chosen to consecrate his relationship to the Guru—'Banda' or the slave. Then the Guru commissioned him to go to the Punjab to lead the Sikhs. He armed Banda with five arrows from his quiver and gave him his own standard and battle drum as emblem of victory. He also issued orders (Hukamnamas) to the Sikhs urging them to volunteer for service. Five Sikhs—Binod Singh, Kahan Singh, Daya Singh, Ram Singh and Baj Singh—representing 'Five Piaras' were sent with Banda for help and to act as his counsel. Twenty more Singhs were also sent with him to render him assistance. Then the Guru advised Banda, "As long as thou remaineth continent, thy glory shall increase. He who is continent, turneth not away from the combat, and his opponents cannot withstand him. The continent man succeedeth in everything. Once thou forsakest the Khalsa principles and associatest illicitly with woman, thy courage shall depart."<sup>2</sup> With these instructions, Banda proceeded towards the Punjab.

Guru Gobind Singh's choice of Banda in preference to many of his own companions has led many scholars to think that Guru knew Banda long before. The available historical evidence does not subscribe to this view. The Guru first heard of Banda when he was at Burhanpur (the place where the Guru separated from the Emperor Bahadur Shah). According to Dr. Ganda Singh, the Guru heard of him at Dadu Dawara from Mahant Jit Mal. But the Guru had only heard of Banda and that too in connection with his mastery of occultism, and he definitely knew him not, particularly in respect of his sterling qualities with which he won

1. Ahmad Shah Batalia, *Zikar-i-Guruan wa Ibada-i-Singhan wa Mazabab-i-Eshan*, p. 11.  
Kaniya Lal: *Tarikh-i-Punjab*, p. 56.  
Mohammad Latif: *History of the Punjab*, p. 294.
2. Quoted by Macauliffe in *The Sikh Religion—its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors*, pp. 238-39.

over the heart of the Guru. The fact that Guru selected him for heading the Sikh Movement having known him only for a month does not prove that the Guru was in hot-haste or Banda had attained enviable eminence as a leader which the Guru wanted to utilise. The Guru's was a sound judgement because Banda gave distinct proof of his capacity and capability for accomplishing the assigned task, and on this account, he was selected for the job.

Banda left the Deccan along with the chosen disciples whom Guru commissioned to accompany him and moved northwards. In the vicinity of Delhi, he learnt that the Emperor Bahadur Shah was still involved in fighting his own brother in the Deccan and that the Rajputs were in open revolt. Shortly after, he also received the information that the murderous assault on Guru Gobind Singh had been made. "Before the assassin's dagger could achieve its fatal consummation, he planted the Guru's standard in a village thirty-five miles from the capital and forwarded the Guru's letters ordering the Sikhs to join him to further the cause of the Sikh Movement." The Sikhs flocked to his banner from all quarters. Bhai Fateh Singh, a descendant of Bhai Bhagtu, Karam Singh and Dharam Singh of Bhai Rupa and Nigahia Singh and Chuhar Singh were among the first who joined him with men and money. Ali Singh and Mali Singh with other Sikhs of Salaudi were next to follow. Chaudhari Ram Singh and Tilok Singh of the Phulkian family liberally contributed to his resources, and in a few months the whole Sikh peasantry was up in arms. Encouraged by this, Banda issued a proclamation offering protection to any one "threatened by thieves, dacoits or highway robbers troubled by Muhammadan bigots or ill-treatment."<sup>1</sup>

This type of proclamation bore great significance. By promising protection to people, Banda assumed one of the important functions of the state, and by naming Muhammadans as bigots he threw up a challenge to the Mughal state which since the time of Aurangzeb had been inclining more and more towards Muslim communalism. Besides this, it brought hope to the Hindus who found the Mughal rule at once suffocating and humiliating. The peasantry, particularly the Sikh peasantry, welcomed the proclamation firstly because they had realised that Banda's Movement would help them get riddance from the Zamindars, who, in collusion with the local officials had arrogated to themselves the right of proprietorship of the lands and were

1. Dr. Ganda Singh, *Banda Bahadur*.

charging exorbitant rents from them and secondly because they were emotionally attached with the Sikh Style and Sikh Movement.

The effect of the proclamation has been beautifully summed up by Khushwant Singh. He says, "the proclamation was like a spark in a highly inflammable situation. The peasants of Malwa rose against the Zamindars and local officials. Banda opened the flood-gates to a sea of pent-up hatred, and all he could do was to ride on the crest of the waves of violence that he had let loose. He could not, nor did he try, to direct his course, knowing full well that he who rides a tiger cannot afford to dismount."<sup>1</sup>

### **Military ventures of Banda**

On his way to Sirhind, the headquarter of the Mughal power in the area between Sutlej and Delhi, Banda Singh plundered many important Muslim places; particularly those wherefrom military assistance could be easily rushed to Sirhind. He entered Sonapat in November, 1709, looted the state treasury and homes of the rich and distributed whatever he got among his men. He sent a column to take Kaithal and led another to Samana. Kaithal fell without much resistance. But a grim fate awaited Samana with many palatial buildings and mosques. This was also the home of Jalal-ud-Din, who had been employed to kill Guru Tegh Bahadur and on this account it was considered to be an accursed place by the Sikhs. The defenders, knowing full well that they would not receive any quarter from the attackers, fought for three days until all that remained was heap of ruins and ten thousand corpses strewn about the streets. After this, Banda proceeded on his triumphant march through the heart of Malwa. Passing through Kunjpura, Ghuram<sup>2</sup>, Thaska<sup>2</sup>, Shahbad and Mustafabad<sup>3</sup>, which fell before Banda Singh without much resistance, he reached Kapuri. Its commander Qadam-ud-Din was notorious for his lustful campaigns. Banda Singh Bahadur decided to pay the devil his due and made a vigorous attack on Kapuri. The strongholds of Qadam-ud-Din were razed to the ground, he and his soldiers were killed. The city was subjected to plunder with impunity.

Banda's next target was Sadhaura, which was another centre of oppression. The ruler of this place Usman Khan had made the

1. Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, pp. 103-104.

2. Kunjpura, Ghuram, Thaska were annihilated by Muslim Rangbars.

3. Mustafabad is 40 kms west of Ambala.

life of the Hindus and the Sikhs a veritable hell. They were not allowed to cremate their dead and perform other religious ceremonies. According to Dr. Ganda Singh, "Cows were slaughtered before the houses of the Hindus and entrails were left in the streets. Many Hindus were compelled to leave the town in disgust. The Sikhs detested the name of Usman Khan, firstly, because of the aforetold reasons, and, secondly, he had tortured to death the great Muslim saint, Sayyid Badr-ud-Din Shah, popularly known as Pir Budhu Shah, simply for his having rendered help to Guru Gobind Singh in the battle of Bhangani. Banda Singh Bahadur marched on Sadhaura with his Sikhs whose number swelled when the aggrieved peasantry who were looking forward to the opportunity joined their ranks. The angry mob got out of control and subjected the place to utter plunder and destruction. All those Muslims who had taken shelter in the mansion of Sayyid Budhu Shah were also put to sword. The place, since then, has been called as Qatalgarhi or slaughter-fortress. After the fall of Sadhaura, the Sikhs took the neighbouring fort of Mukhlisgarh. Therefrom Banda proceeded towards Sirhind.

Banda followed easterly circuitous route to reach Sirhind with some purpose. He wanted to gain time until the Sikhs of Doab and the Majha reached in the vicinity of Sirhind, having cut their way through the opposition of the Maler Koda Afghans who were blocking the passage of the Sutlej.

"Sirhind represented everything that was abominable to the Sikhs. It was here that younger son of Guru Gobind Singh had been done to death by the order of Wazir Khan. It was this man who had been harassing the Guru at Anandpur, had attacked him at Chamkaur, where his elder sons were killed, and had pursued him at Muktsar where the forty saved-ones met their death. Again it was Wazir Khan whose emissaries had assassinated the Guru himself at Nander." In fact this place had been the hot-bed of the intrigues against the Sikhs. The Sikhs were naturally burning with moral rage to wreak their vengeance on the ruler of this city, which was then called 'Guru ki Mari' or the accursed place. No wonder, it was looked upon by the Sikhs as a sacred duty to take part in the struggle led by Banda. Apart from the Sikhs, the generality of the peasantry of the Majha, of the Riarki and of the Doab favoured Banda because his movement promised them their emancipation from the repression of the Mughal revenue collectors and the Zamindars. This being so, Banda had no dearth of recruits.

## Conquest of Sirhind

In all there are said to have been about forty thousand men assembled on this occasion to fight under the banner of Banda. These men were mostly peasants who were equipped with spears, hatchets and farming implements which could be used as weapons. Banda had no artillery, no elephants and not even sufficient number of horses for all his men. Nevertheless, by spring of 1710, he felt strong enough to measure swords with the Mughals. Accordingly, he led his army to attack Sirhind.

Wazir Khan, the faujdar of Sirhind, had also made necessary preparation. Faujdars of Eminabad, Lahore and some other places had come to his help. He had collected huge store of gun-powder and put in a state of preparedness a long train of artillery and elephants. His army comprised 15000 men equipped with muskets and cannons. In addition, there were the volunteers 'Ghazis' (crusaders) armed with swords, spears, bows and arrows.

On the 12th May 1710, the two armies came face to face on the plain of Chappar Chiri, ten miles out of the city of Sirhind. Both sides exerted their maximum to get military advantage. Wazir Khan very cleverly got his own nearly one thousand men recruited in Banda's army to create confusion and spell of demoralisation at the proper moment. Both sides grouped their forces nicely. Banda organised his troops into two assaulting groups (Jathas). In the first group were the Malwais put under the command of Bhai Fateh Singh, Karam Singh, Dharam Singh and Ali Singh and Nigahiya Singh. The Mujhail Singhs formed the second group under the command of Baba Binod Singh, Bhai Baj Singh, Ram Singh and Sham Singh. Banda himself occupied the place on a maund nearby to watch and direct the movements of the army. Banda kept himself free from any fixed duty in the battle. His function was to supervise the operation and rush help wherever it was required. He was also to manoeuvre surprise to confound the enemy. Wazir Khan's strategy did not make any arrangement to diffuse Banda or make his manoeuvres ineffective, nor did he, like Babar, have any contingent to outflank Banda's army. Even the use of artillery on the part of Wazir Khan was not efficient. No special attempts were made to wheel the guns to the places wherefrom Banda's own post might have been battered.

Wazir Khan's battle-array was also sound. In the fore, there was artillery and under its shadow were the infantry, elephants, horsemen. The centre was under the command of Wazir Khan



flanked on right by forces under the guidance of Sher Mohammad of Malerkotla and on the left by Ghazis commanded by Sher Khan. Sher Mohammad's contingent was to face the Malwai (people belonging to Malwa region) Sikhs and Sher Khan's to confront the Mujhails (people belonging to the central region of the Punjab). Baba Khem Singh, who was commanding the centre of Banda's forces, was to face Wazir Khan.

The battle started with fury. The cannonballs spelt disaster in the Banda's army. In the first shock of the battle, the booty-loving irregulars in the ranks of Banda Singh took to their heels. They were followed by a thousand men who had been smuggled in by a nephew of Sucha Nand under the direction of Wazir Khan. At this juncture, Banda thought of the only way: the cold charge on the guns to silence them and to reduce the battle to a hand-to-hand fight. He did not lose even a moment and embarked upon the execution of his plan. The Sikhs, says the author of the *Ahwal-i-Salatin-i-Hind*, came face to face with the Muslims, rapidly discharged their muskets and achieved the task of reducing the battle to a hand-to-hand combat. In this mode of fighting, Banda had the advantage in the preponderance of numbers and the zeal of the neophytes. As a result, the Mohammedan soldiers, despite their bravery and fearlessness, were defeated and killed in a large number. Wazir Khan, eighty years old veteran, then came face to face with Baj Singh and rushed upon him with a lance. Baj Singh snatched the weapon from him and struck it at the forehead of his horse, making him bleed profusely. Wazir Khan pulled out an arrow from his quiver and thrust it at the aim of Baj Singh. Baj Singh with his sword sprang forward to make an end of him. In the meanwhile, Fateh Singh who was standing nearby took out his sword and struck Wazir Khan to his death. Confusion spread in the Muslim ranks and the Sikhs fiercely fell upon them. The battle ended in the complete rout of the Mughal army and the Ghazis. "Not a man of the army of Islam escaped with more than his life and the clothes he stood in," wrote Khafi Khan, "Horsemen and footmen fell under the swords of the infidels, who pursued them as far as Sirhind."<sup>1</sup> The battle began in the morning and lasted until afternoon.<sup>2</sup>

1. *Muntakhib-ul-Lubab: Later Mughals* by Irvine, pp. 96, 97 where the atrocities perpetrated by Banda have been mentioned in detail.
2. *Akbharat-i-Darbar-i-Mualla*, dated May 13, 1710; refer to Ganda Singh's *Makbuz-e-Twarikh-e-Sikhan*, I, 85.

Immediately after this, Banda approached to Sirhind which had been fully garrisoned and provisioned. But the Banda took it after two days of sharp struggle in which five hundred Sikhs lost their lives. The city fell on May 24, 1710. It was fully ransacked, and only those Muslims who had either fled away or had hidden themselves in disguise in the house of Hindus, escaped injury. One of the principal objects of the Sikh vengeance was, of course, Sucha Nand, Wazir Khan's Diwan who had advised Wazir Khan to brick up alive the younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh in a wall of the fort. The Sikhs took him alive, and made him walk with a thread in his nose through the bazars of Sirhind, after which he met his miserable, disgraceful and ignominious death. Whereas Sucha Nand's death marked catharsis of the Sikh's hatred for the Mughal forces, it did not evoke sympathy in any quarter—rather it made the peasantry very happy, as they had their own grievances. "I have heard from reliable people of the neighbourhood," wrote a diarist of the times, "that during the time of the late Khan there was no cruelty that had not been inflicted upon the poor subjects, and that there was no seed of which he now reaped the fruit that he had not sown for himself."<sup>1</sup> The booty that fell into the hands of the Sikhs is estimated at two crores, in money and goods, belonging to Wazir Khan, and some lakhs found in the deserted houses of Sucha Nand and others. The irregulars and the people from whom Wazir Khan and Sucha Nand had collected money, also carried away cart-loads of valuables from Sirhind.<sup>2</sup> It is said that the plundering of the city continued for three days. On the fourth day, it was stopped at the intervention of local Hindus who appealed to Banda for amnesty which was granted to the inhabitants on their paying a large ransom. The curse, however, is attached to the city, and even now a pious Sikh may be seen pulling out a brick or two from its ruins and conveying them to the waters of the Sutlej or the Jamuna.

Khafi Khan and other contemporary Muslim writers give a horrible account of the sack of Sirhind. Basing his conclusions on these accounts, Muhammad Latif says, "Banda punished the city in a vindictive and barbarous manner. He committed it to be fired, and all the inhabitants to be put to death....They slaughtered the inhabitants indiscriminately without regard to age or sex. They butchered, bayoneted, strangled, hanged, shot down, hacked to

1. Mohammad Qasim, *Ibrat Nama*, pp. 20-21.

2. Sohan Singh, *Banda the Brave*, Lahore (1915), p. 87.



pieces and burnt alive every Muhammadan in the place....The corpse of Wazir Khan was hanged on a tree and left to the tender mercies of the crows and vultures. The sanctity of graveyards was violated and corpses were exhumed, hewn to pieces and exposed as carrions for the wolves, jackals and other nocturnal visitants to these abodes of the dead. The mosques were polluted and burnt down and the Mullahs, Maulvies and Hafizs subjected to the greatest indignities and tortures."

Such statements are blindly repeated by later writers without subjecting them to critical analysis. The Mausoleum of Ahmad Shah (Sheikh Ahmad Mujaddid Alif Sani) the most significant of such buildings which still stands as it did before the battle, and is, we think, sufficient evidence of the exaggeration in Latif's statement. Moreover there is no particular example of any such outrage. Only the Sikh sources mention the digging up of a grave at Malerkotla and that too of Bibi Anup Kaur who had been kidnapped by Sher Mohammad Khan and who had committed suicide to save her honour. The Sikhs dug out her body and cremated it. It is possible that some people might have misunderstood this fact and later writers like Latif, without making any attempt to find out reality, made the misunderstood fact as the basis of the general statement. This thing is obviously deplorable especially on the part of Latif who was well-versed in modern methodology of historical research.

Undoubtedly, Sirhind was punished with unremitting severity and the Sikhs wreaked their vengeance on the Muslims of this city but the causes for all this were not far to seek. Sirhind, apart from being the place of the murder of the Guru's sons and the death of Mata Gujri, was the headquarter of the Sarkar whose faujdar, Wazir Khan was a great bulwark against the tide of Sikh Movement. In this context, it is but natural for the Sikhs to be furious at Sirhind and it would have been inadvisable for Banda to check the Sikhs from being violently violent—atleast for some time—especially when he himself was, to a great extent, responsible for stimulating the Sikhs to such extreme actions.

So far as the killing of Maulvies etc. was concerned that was due to their conduct vis-a-vis the non-Muslims including the Sikhs. Were they not propping up the orthodox section of the Muslims and did they not provide moral backing to Wazir Khan's actions of putting the Guru's younger sons and his mother to death? This being so, the fury against such people was understandable.

Besides this, every action of Banda should be judged with reference to the attitudes and behaviour of the party pitched against him. The Mughal state, up to this time, seems to have resolved to smash the Sikh Movement out of existence—the fact which is corroborated by its resorting to the cry of Jihad and by Bahadur Shah's strict measures against the Sikhs.

Banda was now the virtual master of the territories between the Jamuna and the Sutlej yielding an annual revenue of thirty-six lacs of rupees. His sun was in the ascendant. From Sirhind as a centre, Banda sent out parties to occupy the country to the south, to the east and to the west. In the first two directions nearly the whole Sarkar of Sirhind (of Subah Delhi) was occupied. Samana, Sunam, Mustafabad, Kaithal, Kuaram, Buriya, Sadhaura, Chath, Ambala, Shahbad, Thanesar, Pael, Supar, Pahlvapur, Machhiwara, Ludhiana, all parganas in the north of Sirhind Sarkar between the Sutlej and the Jamuna fell into the possession of the Sikhs.<sup>1</sup>

Their further progress southwards from Thanesar was opposed by Sardar Khan, a Muhammadan Rajput Zamindar. If it had not been for his exertions, there was nothing really to stop their advancement upon Delhi. It is true that Asad Khan, the Vakil-i-Mutlaq or vicegerant was there, and as governor of the province in which Sirhind was included, it was his duty to have taken active measures to restore order, but he did nothing, probably because he was old and indifferent.

### **Banda's Administration**

Immediately after this, Banda addressed himself to the task of evolving administrative machinery for the conquered territories. He appointed Baz Bahadur as the governor of Sirhind. His chief responsibility was to be on guard against the Mughal troops from Lahore and Jammu. For the administration of Samana and Thanesar he appointed Fateh Singh<sup>2</sup> and Ram Singh respectively. Binod Singh in addition to his post of the revenue minister, was entrusted with the administration of Karnal and Panipat. His main duty was to guard the road from Delhi.

1. Irvin, *Later Mughals*, reprint, January 1971, p. 98.

2. Samana was the district town and had nine parganas attached to it. It was placed under charge of Fateh Singh. Samana was the first territorial conquest and the first administrative unit of Banda Singh Bahadur. Fateh Singh was assigned a body of troopers to maintain peace and order. Samana was occupied on November 26, 1709.

Banda made the old fort of Mukhlispur a pleasant hill resort in the vicinity of the Himalayas, his headquarter. He introduced a new calendar dating from the capture of Sirhind (12th May, 1710). He struck coins to mark his reign bearing the names of Guru Nanak and Gobind. "His seal bore not only the names of the Gurus but also the two things which had contributed most to the popularity and power of the Sikhs and their Gurdwara—the Deg or cauldron in the Guru's langar and the Teg, the sword of the Khalsa."<sup>1</sup> The obverse of the coin bore the following words :

Sikka Zad Har do Alam Tegh-i-Nanak Wahib Ast

Fateh Gobind Singh Sahi-Sahan Fazal-i-Sacha Wahib Ast.

(By true Lord's grace is struck the coin in the two worlds, Guru Nanak's sword is the granter of all boons and victory belongs to the king of kings, Guru Gobind Singh)

The Persian inscription on the reverse of the coin was as under :

Zarb ba Amān-ud-dahar Musvarat Sāhar

Zinat-ut-Takhat-i-Mubarak Bakht

(Struck in the Heaven of refuge, the beautiful city, the ornament of the blessed throne.)

Banda further introduced an official seal for the Sikh state documents and letters patent, which contained the following inscription :

Deg-o-Teg-o-Fateh-o-Nusrat-i-Bedring,

Yāft Az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh.

(Through the hospitality and sword to unending victory granted by Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh.)

In the parganas occupied by the Sikhs, the change in the mood of the people was striking and socialistic in nature. "A low scavenger or leather dresser, the lowest of the low in Indian estimation had only to leave home and join Banda's army when in a short space of time, he would return to his birth-place as its ruler. As soon as he set foot within the boundaries, the well-born and wealthy went out to greet him and escort him home. Arrived there, they stood before him with joined palms awaiting his orders."<sup>2</sup>

Though Banda did not find enough of time to enunciate the principles of his rule, yet a few of his recorded utterances pointed

1. Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, p. 107.

2. Irvin, *Later Mughals*, reprint 1971, pp. 98-99.

to the shape of things to be worked.

He was positively against Zamindari and one of his most important measures was the abolition of Zamindari. According to Giani Gian Singh, "He (Banda Singh Bahadur) abolished Zamindari system in the whole province at one stroke.<sup>1</sup> Once quite a large number of the tillers of the soil in the neighbourhood of Sadhaura waited upon him in deputation to complain against the atrocities of the Zamindars. Banda listened to them patiently. Then suddenly he lost temper and ordered Baj Singh to make them stand in a file and shoot them down.

This attitude of Banda completely unnerved them. At this juncture, Banda shouted that if they, being in overwhelming majority, could not put down the Zamindars who were far less in number as compared with them, they did not deserve any place under the sun. The tillers caught the hint and went back to their place, surcharged with new determination and courage to pay the landlords in their own coin. Banda was a staunch believer in quick justice and especially in the cases where the poor and the weak were involved.

No wonder, quite a large number of people including Muslims came to him with complaints against the Mughal officials and Zamindars.

### **Banda in the Upper Ganga Doab, 1710**

Banda wanted to extend its scope to the Hindus outside his state also. His invitation to Rajput Rajas, Ajit Singh of Jodhpur and Swai Jai Singh of Jaipur were well-calculated steps towards this end. However, he did not meet with any success, but he was not to be blamed for it. The Rajputs were still steeped in mental slavery. They regarded themselves as Khanzadas (slaves) of the Empire. Centuries of slavish mentality could not be easily discarded by them. Instead of joining hands with Banda, they chose to volunteer their services to the Mughal state for exterminating the Sikhs and 'to kill or to arrest their leader'.

At Mukhlisgarh, Banda learned that Bahadur Shah, after subduing his brother in the Deccan, was contemplating the subjugation of Rajasthan and was not likely to return to Delhi before the Monsoons. Banda decided to utilize the opportunity to destroy the remaining vestiges of Mughal rule in Northern India.

1. Gian Singh, *Panth Parkash*, pp. 363-70.

Banda crossed the Jamuna and invested Saharanpur and was much helped by the Gujjars<sup>1</sup> of the pargana of Saharanpur who were fed up with atrocities of Jalal-ud-Din, the governor of Jalalabad. The Sikhs of the village much umbraged at the forcible conversion of the Hindus into Islam had also rendered much help to the Banda. According to Khushwant Singh, "His arrival was a signal for Gujjar herdsmen to rise against the Nawab and Zamindars who had oppressed them for many decades. They declared themselves *Nanak Prast* (followers of Nanak) and joined their fellow peasants from the Punjab. The local faujdar Ali Hamid Khan and all those who could get away, fled to Delhi. Of those that remained, many men of noble and respectable families received the Sikhs with bullets and arrows but soon fell fighting bravely. Saharanpur was ruthlessly plundered."

After Saharanpur fell the neighbouring towns of Behat and Ambheta, the Pirzadas of Behat who were notorious for their anti-Hindu policies, were slashed to a man. Just as the Monsoons broke, Nanauta was captured by the Sikhs with the massive support of the Gujjars. The *Shaikhzadas* of the place put up a gallant defence, but before the superior forces of Banda, they could not achieve much and ultimately submitted to him. The town of Nanauta was razed to the ground and since then it has been called *Phoota Shabar* or 'Ruined Town'.

From Nanauta, Banda wrote a letter to faujdar, Jalal Khan of Jalalabad, a city which he himself had founded, to the effect that he should return the Sikhs which he had imprisoned at village Unarsa and accept the authority of the Khalsa. Jalal Khan did not act upto the wishes of Banda; on the other hand, he paraded derisively the bearer of the letter through the streets of the town and then ejected him from the town. Chagrined at this, the Sikhs surrounded two large villages, situated at four or five miles from Jalalabad. Jalal Khan despatched out a strong force to relieve these villages under the stewardship of his grandson Ghulam Mohammad Khan and Hizbar Khan, his cousin. Encouraged by the arrival of reinforcement, the villagers, four or five hundred in number, armed with match-locks or bows, and a number of other tenantry armed in various ways came out boldly to measure strength with the Sikhs. In the fight though Hizbar Khan and a number of Muhammadans and villagers lost their lives, yet the Sikhs could not achieve definite results. Ultimately, the Sikhs who were

1. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mualla*, p. 32, news dated July 2, 1710.

seventy to eighty thousand strong, laid siege to Jalalabad and invested it closely for twenty days. Both sides suffered immense loss. In the end, the Sikhs withdrew without having been able to take the town. Why did Banda raise the siege? Was it because of the bleak prospects of victory against Jalal Khan or something else? Certainly it was not the opposition of Jalal Khan that worked upon Banda's mind to take such decision because it was not at all possible for Jalal Khan to hold on for a very long time and only a few more days were required to capture Jalalabad.

In order to find out the real cause for Banda's withdrawal from Jalalabad, we will have to study the situation vis-a-vis his objectives and angle. Banda led expedition into Indo-Gangetic Doab not to occupy the area but simply to bolster up the 'Sikhs and their sympathisers and to chastise the Mughal officials to concede the independent theo-political character to the Sikhs'. Banda succeeded in his object only partially. As a matter of fact, he wanted to confine his activities to the area of the Punjab; because it was here that he could achieve some success in consummating the programme framed by Guru Gobind Singh and establish Sikh Rule to speed up the process of the consummation. So it is not difficult to surmise that he wanted to leave this area as early as it was possible. Two factors prompted him to do so without any loss of time—firstly, the monsoons were about to set in and crossing of Jamuna was thought to be advisable before the monsoons made it unfordable; secondly, he received many appeals from the Sikhs of the Jullundur Doab to help them against the Mughal faujdar; and thirdly, Bahadur Shah who was pre-occupied with the affairs in the Deccan was likely to come to the Punjab soon.

### **The Jullundur Doab**

The news of Banda's victory at Sirhind was enough to put heart into the Sikhs in Jullundur Doab. They rose to a man, ousted the Muslim officials and appointed their own men in their stead. They sent parwana (as if he was their subordinate) to Shams Khan, the faujdar of the Doab, urging him to submit and to send supplies as they needed and to deliver royal treasury to them. Shams Khan gave an evasive reply, but at the same time, did not relent in his efforts to make preparations for war against the Sikhs.

Soon after he was able to take the field at the head of more than one hundred thousand Muslims, he also collected 4/5



thousand horses and 30 thousand foot.<sup>1</sup> As soon as the Sikhs heard that Shams Khan was coming, they moved at the head of 7000 horse and foot, with the cannon taken at Sirhind, much siege material in the shape of planks and sand bags for preparing batteries, with cart-loads of powder and lead. Fifty miles east of Sultanpur, they reached near the town of Rahon. They occupied the mounds formed by some brick-kilns, and with the bricks and debris built a sort of fort, placed entrenchments round their camp, and awaited an attack.

Shams Khan and his supporters knew full well that if they were defeated, they would be ruined. They moved cautiously. Shams Khan had warned his troops against too hasty an advance and a useless expenditure of powder. They bore onward slowly and steadily and then reinforced by a number of their co-religionists from the country around rushed on the Sikhs who, finding the odds too heavy for them, took refuge within their improvised fort at Rahon.

They were able to hold their position for several days and at night their parties issued forth to harass the outlying posts of the Muhammadans, destroying many horses and men. Both sides suffered heavily in these clashes. After some time, the Sikhs evacuated their entrenchments during the night. Shams Khan, having pursued them for some miles, returned in triumph to Sultanpur. The next day, however, about one thousand Sikhs came back, ejected Shams Khan's officers and reoccupied Rahon. This happened on the 12th October 1710. Next they seized Jullundur and Hoshiarpur without any battle. In this way, within a very short span of time, they liberated the whole of Jullundur Doab.

The revolt spread across the Sutlej over the whole of Majha region. Starting from Amritsar, the Sikh armies marched northwards towards the hills, taking Kalanaur, Batala and Pathankot. Then they over-ran the tract between the Sutlej and the Ravi.

Encouraged by their victories in Majha (central Punjab), the Sikh armies occupied the major portion of Kasur and they advanced to the outer boundary of Lahore. Sayyad Aslam Khan, a Maulvi from Kabul, who was the deputy of Prince Muiz-ud-Din, Jahandar Shah, the Emperor's eldest son, did not make any effort to repel the attack by the Sikhs. The Sikh depredations extended

1. According to Khafi Khan, in addition to these he collected 4/5 thousand horses and 30 thousand foot. Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab-ul-Liḥab*, Vol. II, p. 655. Also see Elliot and Dawson, *History of India as told by its own Historians*, Vol. VII, p. 416.

even to the suburbs and to the Shalamar garden, only three miles from the city. The Mohammedans of Lahore now took the matter into their own hands. Muhammad Taqi, a relation of the late Shah Sadullah (Shah Jahan's great Wazir), Musa Beg Lechani, son of Khuda Wirdi Beg, Aghar Khan, specially exerted themselves to collect men and obtain supplies. Many traders made contributions in money. Others such as Haji Yar Beg, Sayyad Inayat and Mulla Pir Mohammad joined in person. The rallying point was the plain near the Idgah Mosque. The Mullahs gathered together and described the struggle against the Sikhs as Jihad, a crusade against the infidels and in token thereof Haidri Flag was raised. Sayyad Aslam also joined the struggle and sent out a force of 500 horse and foot commanded by Ata-Ullah and Mahabat Khan Kharrel. This force worked by the Muslim crusaders of Lahore pressurised the Sikhs to retreat to Pargana Tappa Bharli where there was a small brick fort built by Bhagwan Rai, the Qanungo of the pargana. The Sikhs hurriedly occupied the fort and put it in a state of defence. Shortly after, the Muslim forces and crusaders invested the fort. The Sikhs held on for sometime and then they decamped under the cover of darkness. The Muhammedans returned to Lahore and according to Qasim Lahori, the author of *Ibrat Nama*, they signalled their return by insulting the Hindus of the city and hurling threats on their own rulers.

Once again the Sikhs gathered at Kotla Begam, a place in the Batala Sarkar. The Lahore Muhammedans took the field for second time. Since majority of them was an indisciplined mass, they, during the march, could not restrain their greed for money and subjected many a village to plunder. The fact deterred many Muslims to join them. As the Muslims reached Kotla Begam, the Sikhs came out of the fort and challenged them in the open. The Muslims suffered heavily in the contest. The Afghans of Sauri village who were disaffected owing to the governor's exactions had come to an understanding with the Sikh leaders and while the fortune of the day was doubtful, these Afghans turned their bridle-reins and made for their homes. The remaining Mohammedans were unable to hold their own and some of the leaders including Sayyad Inayat, Muhammad Zaman and Mohammad Taqi. During the night, the Muhammedan force melted away into nothing and the Sikhs achieved complete victory. Immediately after this, Riarki and the entire Majha were occupied. Banda did not occupy Lahore because he was in a hurry to look after his government.



These military victories of the Sikhs created a terror in the minds of the Mohammedans. In the words of Iradat Khan, "There was no noble daring enough to march from Delhi against them." The above fact has been confirmed by Malcolm who states, "If Bahadur Shah had not quitted the Deccan, which he did in 1710, there is every possibility to think the whole of Hindustan had been subdued by these invaders. From the Jamuna to the Ravi and beyond, the only person who mattered was Banda. And in those fateful days had Banda shown more enterprise, he could have captured Delhi and Lahore and so changed the entire course of Indian History."<sup>1</sup>

The news of the Sikh outbreak under Banda was first broken to Bahadur Shah on May 30, 1710 when he was approaching Ajmer on his return march from the Deccan. A peace was forthwith patched up with the Rajputs, obviously to give exclusive attention to the disturbances in the Punjab. Meanwhile, the plundered inhabitants of Sirhind and Thanesar accompanied by Pirzadas of Sirhind and Sadhaura arrived at the royal camp in the destitute condition, to tell their tale of oppression they had suffered at the hands of the Sikhs. The stories of sufferings of his co-religionists and also of the members of the ruling aristocracy lent poignancy to his hitherto made resolve of destroying the Sikhs root and branch. Consequently, he despatched urgent orders to Khan-i-Durrani, the Subedar of Oudh, Muhammad Amin Khan Chin, the faujdar of Muradabad, Khan Jahan subedar of Allahabad, the Sayyid Abdulla Khan Burha to march without delay and join Asad Khan, subedar of Delhi in his advance against the Sikhs. Meanwhile, the Emperor's camp moved on via Rupnagar, Sambhar, Rasulpur, Praggpur and Narnaul, Delhi being passed on their right hand at a considerable distance. Churman Jat of Bharatpur reported himself on duty in the royal camp in Delhi.

In order to prevent desertions, proclamation was made on the 25th August, 1710 that no man should visit Delhi without

---

1. Khafi Khan says, "For eight or nine months, and from two or three days march from Delhi to the environs of Lahore, all the towns and places of note were pillaged by these unclean wretches and trodden under foot and destroyed. Men in countless numbers were slain, the whole country was wasted and mosques and tombs were razed. These infidels had set up a new rule, and had forbidden the shaving of the hair of the head and beards."

permission nor should anyone's family come out to the camp to see him.<sup>1</sup>

Since the Emperor feared that most Hindus were in sympathy with the rebellion and had secretly come into the fold of the Sikh Faith, he, to arrest this development as also to take a precautionary measure, issued a proclamation to all the Hindus employed in the Imperial offices to shave off their beards. The proclamation was given effect to with seriousness. "Petty officers perambulated the streets and bazaars of the camp, followed by barbers having dirty water in scavenger's vessel. Whenever they came across any Hindu growing beard, they seized him and shaved his beard off. The clerks in the Imperial offices hid themselves in their quarters, and did not appear again in public, until they had been shaved."<sup>2</sup>

From Pragpat (7th August, 1710) a force was sent on in advance under the command of Firoz Khan Mewati. A week or two after the first force had started, another force under Sayyad Wajid-ud-Din Khan Barha was sent. The movement of the royal camp had come to a halt for several days; firstly, because the king was to celebrate his birthday and secondly the heavy rains poured. It could reach Sonapat on 22nd October, 1710 which it occupied without any opposition from the Sikhs in occupation of the town. On 26th October, 1710 Firoz Khan Mewati assisted by Rustam Dil Khan and others defeated the Sikhs between Indri and Karnal and sent one hundred heads to the Emperor to mark his victory. The Emperor was much pleased and Firoz Khan was rewarded with the appointment of faujdar of Sirhind, and six robes of honour were sent for him and his companions.

The next marches were to Sarai Samalkha, Panipat, Gharonda, Karnal and Thanesar. Panipat was cleared of the Sikhs by Bayazid Khan, the faujdar of the Jammu hill country and Shams-ud-Din, the faujdar of Jullundur Doab. Near Thanesar at village Amingarh, the Sikhs put up resistance under the leadership of Binod Singh and Ram Singh but it wore out under the heavy pressure of the Muslim army. Firoz Khan, after clearing the Thanesar, had gone on to Shahbad, ten miles further to the north. Such Sikhs as had been made prisoners were strung up to the roadside trees, their long hair being twisted to perform the function of a rope.<sup>3</sup>

1. Hari Ram Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. II, p. 17.

2. Qasim Lahori, *Ibrat Nama*, p. 32; *Muntakhab-ul-Lahab*, Vol. II, pp. 669-74.

3. Kamwar Khan, *Tazkirat-us-Salatin-i-Cbughatiya*.

The next confrontation with the Sikhs took place on the outskirts of Sirhind. Here, too, the Sikhs who fought under Sukha Singh, the Brother of Baj Singh, were worsted and rushed to take shelter in the fort of Sirhind. At this juncture, the Emperor directed Mohammad Amin Khan and Isa Khan, who had been appointed to command a detached force and who had done commendable work in Doaba Bist Jullundur to march with all speed and take measures for the reduction and occupation of Sirhind. Fortunately neither Banda nor Baj Singh, the Sikh Subedar of Sirhind was there. As a result, the Mughals faced only feeble resistance. But before they reached, the forces spearheaded by Bayazid Khan and Shams Khan had accomplished the task. To signalise the re-conquest of Sirhind, 300 severed heads of the Sikhs and the captured shells and arms were sent by them to the Emperor. This being so, Muhammad Amin Khan's desire to be the acclaimed sole hero of Sirhind could not see its consummation, thereby causing a great heart-burning to him. This being the state of mind, Amin Khan turned a staunch enemy of Shams Khan. He insinuated on the Emperor that Shams Khan entertained ulterior motive of assuming sovereignty in his area. The Emperor's pride got injured and he passed order that Shams Khan should be relieved of his post of faujdar of Jullundur Doab. Obviously, Shams Khan's case was that of a tragic irony.

Leaving Thanesar on 25th November, 1710, Bahadur Shah in five marches by way of Shahbad and Ankala reached Sadhaura on the 13th of the same month. The town of Sadhaura is about 36 miles north-east of Thanesar and is situated on a high hill of steep ascent standing on the edge of the Markanda torrent, in a hilly and, in those days well-wooded country. The Sikhs did not think it advisable to risk an encounter and hence they hastened to the hills north-east of that place and took shelter in the fort named Lohgarh (fort of iron) at Mukhlipur. Banda Bahadur who commanded the Sikhs arrayed his cannons on the walls of the fort and his soldiers on the points wherefrom the enemy could be hit properly. The campaigning of the Imperialists became more arduous because of the difficult terrain and the chilly weather. The Imperial forces suffered a heavy loss, supplies ran deficient and the slippery or muddy ground proved another obstacle. All these things dampened the spirit of the Mughal troops. The losses among the horses and cattle were very heavy. Added to these material difficulties were others of a more imaginary but no less potent

nature. According to the popular opinion, Banda was ascribed magical and supernatural powers i.e. he had the power to make a calf to talk; he could turn a bullet from its course and work such spells that spear and sword had little or no effect upon his followers. Owing to these idle rumours the Emperor and the nobles and the soldiers were much disturbed. The Sikhs, on the other hand, were encouraged by the belief instilled into them by Banda that all who lost their lives in this war would be recreated at once in a higher rank of life.<sup>1</sup>

On the 4th December, 1710 Rustam Dil Khan was directed to select an appropriate site for the next encampment. He had hardly gone three miles from the camp when the Sikhs commenced the attack with rockets and musket balls.

Rustam Dil Khan rushed upon them, while the Sikhs stood the ground bravely. Soon the rest of the Imperial troops reached and the scales were turned in favour of the Imperial forces. About fifteen hundred Sikhs were slain, including two of their leaders. Of the Imperialists, the notable loss was that of the nephew of Firoz Khan Mewati. Just before the dusk, the Sikhs made off into the hills.

### **The Siege of Lohgarh**

On December 9, 1710 A.D., Bahadur Shah's camp reached the bank of Som. It was here that the plans for the capture of Banda and Lohgarh were framed and strategy decided upon to execute them. As per programme, on December 10, 1710 Prince Rafi-us-Shan led the Imperial troops towards the foot of the Dabar Hills. Munim Khan, the minister accompanied by his two sons, Mahabat Khan and Khan Zaman, and Raja Chattar Sal Bundela bore away to the right by a route pointed out to him by men with knowledge of locality. Munim Khan was also supported by the troops of Hamid-ud-Din Khan and the contingent of the princes Azim-us-Shan and Jahan Shah.

Munim Khan and his force came upon the Sikhs, strongly entrenched on the top of the hills. The murderous fire of the Imperial artillery and musketry dislodged the Sikhs from quite a few positions. About mid-day Munim Khan's troops approached the Lohgarh fort, the Banda's headquarter. A fierce struggle

---

1. Kamwar Khan, *Tazkirat-us-Salatn-i-Chughatiya*, p. 78; *Dastur-ul-Insba*, p. 11.

ensued. By this time, the Imperial troops under Rafi-us-Shan also reached near the walls of Lohgarh.

The Sikhs were hard-pressed to the extreme. According to one belief, they started eating the flesh of the horses and other animals and yet there was no consternation among them. No wonder, they decided to pierce through the Mughal lines and to seek shelter somewhere else.

Just at this time, Gulab Singh, the treasurer of the Sikh army who bore close resemblance to Banda, decided to sacrifice his life to save Banda whose life he regarded more precious for the Sikh Movement than his own. He disguised himself as Banda and jumped into the battle-field to divert the attention of the Mughals towards him. Banda made most of the opportunity and escaped to the hills of Nahan with some of his soldiers on the night of the 10th December, 1710. In the morning when the Mughal armies occupied the fort under the leadership of Amin Khan, they were much disappointed not to find Banda therein. Among the captured was one Gulab Singh who resembled and had dressed himself like Banda. The exultation over the capture of the dreaded Banda turned into chagrin when it was discovered that 'the hawk had flown and the owl was netted'.

Bahadur Shah flew into rage at the escape of Banda and reproached Amin Khan for all this. He issued orders to the Rajas of Srinagar and Nahan to seize Banda wherever they found him. The escape had been made into or through Nahan territory and it was on account of this thing that Emperor's wrath was directed against the Raja of Nahan. Hamid Khan was sent to seize him. Accordingly Bhup Parkash, the son of Hari Parkash the ruler of Nahan, was brought back a prisoner. Bhup Parkash was put in iron cage and sent to Delhi. Other prisoners including thirty retainers who had accompanied Bhup Parkash to plead for their ruler, were handed over to the executioner. Fateh Singh of Srinagar (Garhwal) was shrewd enough to save himself from the wrath of the Emperor by sending presents.

Although the principal object of the campaign, which was the capture of Banda Bahadur, was not achieved, the campaign was not fruitless, for a huge booty fell into the hands of the Imperialists. According to an estimate it comprised many horses and camels, five elephants, three big guns, seventeen small guns, a few muskets and swords, a canopy with silver poles, gold and silver coins worth eight lakhs of rupees and few underground gold

coins to the value of twenty lakhs of rupees.<sup>1</sup>

### In the Hills

Within fifteen days of his escape from Mukhlisgarh, Banda began to send *Hukamnamas* (fiat) exhorting the people to liberate the Punjab and once again to join him at Kiratpur in the Shivalik hills. He decided to secure the sub-mountainous hinterland before descending on the plains. His first victim was Raja Ajmer Chand of Bilaspur, who had spared no stone unturned to torment Guru Gobind Singh.

The ageing Raja and his forces were no match for the Sikhs led by the tireless Banda. The inevitable happened. Bilaspur capitulated and was sacked.

Sidh Shah of Mandi declared himself the follower of Guru Nanak and gave in marriage a girl from his family to him. Kulu and Chamba submitted of their own accord. Udai Singh of Chamba even married his daughter to Banda Bahadur, who was supremely beautiful with large eyes and limbs, exquisitely graceful and delicate, a very image of the goddess of love.<sup>2</sup>

Having got strong foothold in the hill area, Banda came down in the plains again. Early in June 1711, an engagement was fought at Bahrampur near Jammu. The Mughal faujdar of Jammu Qutab-ud-Din Khan Khesghi alongwith his nephew Shams Khan was killed and the Sikhs carried the day. Then follows the occupation of Batala and Kalanaur, whose inhabitants after the death of Shams Khan, the erstwhile faujdar, felt extremely demoralised. Aurangabad and Pasrur and other places were also taken.

But Banda's hold could not last long because the Imperialists were also very active. Bahadur Shah came in hot pursuit and Banda had to retreat to Jammu. Once again Bahadur Shah wreaked his vengeance on innocent men and women. An order was issued for the wholesale massacre of the Sikhs.

On August 11, 1711 Bahadur Shah reached Lahore. And stayed here till he expired on 27th February 1712. During this short period, he did not relax his efforts to curb, even the spirit of the Sikhs. A month earlier to his death, Mohammad Amin Khan

1. Ganda Singh, *Banda Singh Babadur*, pp. 144-49; Kamwar Khan quoted in *Banda Singh*.

2. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. V, pp. 248-49.



reported his severe fight against the Sikhs in which the latter were worsted. Rustam Dil Khan on charge of showing leniency to Banda was relieved of his office and necessary orders were passed for the confiscation of his property. But with the death of the Emperor, the situation changed. Amin Khan left the Punjab to take part in the battle for succession between Emperor's sons and the politics involved in it.

It was too good an opportunity for Banda to miss. He descended on the plains, re-occupied Sadhaura and Lohgarh and once more sent out *Ftikamnamas* to the Sikhs to rally round him to wage struggle against the Mughals.

The battle of succession was eventually won by Jahandar Shah. The Emperor, in spite of being a debauch, short-sighted and foolish, did not relent in respect of the Sikh rebellion in the Punjab. As soon as he disposed of his brothers, he turned his attention to the rebellion in the Punjab. Muhammad Amin Khan was sent back to continue the campaign and Zain-ud-Din Ahmed Khan, faujdar of Sirhind, was issued orders to work under him. The Mughal armies again closed on Sadhaura and Lohgarh. The siege dragged on for eight long months. The Sikh soldiers remained undaunted taking fight as a sport. Their confidence was so great that they did not consider it imperative to store provisions for a long time, hoping that none would be able to prevent them from bringing them as and when need would arise.

Banda had some relief towards the end of 1712, when the attention of the besieging force was diverted by the rebellion of Jahandar's nephew, Farrukh Siyyar. But during this period Banda could not attain much as he had been sufficiently mauled and ruffled by the long and desultory warfare with the result he was unable to come down into the plains.

As soon as Farrukh Siyyar became Emperor, he sent two very energetic officers, Abdus Samad Khan and his son Zakariya Khan, with specific instructions to destroy Banda. Abdus Samad Khan arrived at Sadhaura in October 1713. Banda himself was in Lohgarh, while the Sikhs held the fort of Sadhaura. The Imperialists' strategy was to pressurise the Sikhs of Sadhaura to evacuate it and join Banda in Lohgarh where they intended to crush them completely. The Imperialists succeeded in pushing the Sikhs to Lohgarh. Making most of the opportunity Abdus Samad Khan assisted by Ahmed Khan, the faujdar of Sirhind, encircled the fort from three sides while the Muslim fanatics were to guard the fourth side of the fort. Banda,

to foil the Imperialists in their design, sent over three or four bands of the Sikhs to spread consternation and nervousness among them by attacking at different points simultaneously but these sorties met with no success and the Sikhs had to evacuate the fort.

Abdus Samad's forces followed them to Lohgarh, but the Sikhs abandoned it before the Imperialists reached the ramparts of the fort. The Imperial forces selected a place of eminence for their encampment with a view to keeping strict watch over the movement of the enemy. The Sikhs who were also in the know of the designs of their adversaries streamed down the farther side of the hill, thereby enabling them to have view of their activities. Why did the Sikhs give up Lohgarh without putting up any resistance while they had fifty-two posts from the first ridge up to wall of Lohgarh, arranged in such a manner that each protected the other, thus exposing an assailant to a deadly fire throughout his advance? This question has baffled many a military strategist. According to one view, the Sikhs had to do so because the supplies failed and provisions ran short. Some scholars ascribe the non-resistance of the Sikhs to the panic that stalked the Sikh ranks while the Imperialists' horsemen reached the ridge nearby the fort.

Whatever the case it might be, the advantage could not be followed to its logical end; the pursuit was delayed by several days and in the meanwhile Banda retreated further into the Himalayan fastnesses. The capture of Sadhaura and Lohgarh were reported at Delhi on the 9th October 1713. Abdus Samad Khan and his son were recalled to Delhi where they were loaded with honours, and were ordered to direct their energies to the difficult task of the reconquest of Rajasthan. The event emboldened the Muslims and they started persecuting the Sikhs remorselessly, especially in the parganas of Kalanaur, Batala, Kahnawan in Gurdaspur district where the Muslims formed considerable majority. Exasperated, the Sikhs rose in revolt under the leadership of Jagjit Singh against the Pathan chief Uman Ghazi of village Kiri Pathana in the Pargana of Kahnawan. There was a heavy slaughter of the Muslims in the scuffle. Booty worth about sixty thousand in cash and kind fell into the hands of the Sikhs (27th March, 1714).

In August 1714 a body of seven thousand Sikh soldiers fell upon Ropar. Khwaja Mukaram, the deputy of Zain-ud-Din Ahmed Khan, the faujdar, put up a gallant defence and forced the Sikhs to eat an humble pie. In this encounter, the Sikh loss in life was about two hundred and they retreated to the hills.



Steps were taken by the Muslim officials especially by Khidmat Talab Khan, who replaced Zain-ud-Din Ahmed Khan in Sirhind, to restrict their entry into the plains, but no tangible result could be achieved. After a few months, they re-appeared in the plains from the direction of Jammu. The Parganas of Kalanaur and Batala were plundered, in spite of the efforts of the faujdars, Suhrab Khan and Sheikh Muhammad Daim and of Saulakh Rai Qanungo. Abdus Samad at this time had marched southwards from Lahore to repress the outbreak of the Bhatti Zamindars in the wild region known as Lakhi jungle, and hence he could not attend to the Sikh menace personally. In his absence Mir Ahmed Khan, faujdar of Gujrat, Iradatmand Khan, faujdar of Emanabad, Nur Muhammad Khan, ruler of Aurangabad and Pasrur, Sheikh Mohammad Daim (Batala), Sohrab Khan (Kalanaur), Sayyad Hafiz Ali Khan of Pargana of Haibatpur Patti, Raja Bhim Singh Kamboh and Hardeen son of Raja Dharb Deo, assembled their forces and marched against the Sikhs. In a village near Batala, Banda dug himself in. Before he could complete his defence fortifications, the Imperial forces came upon him. Artillery blasted Banda into the open field. Banda stood his ground and to the shock of the Mughal commander trounced their vastly superior forces. Even after the Mughals had recovered shock Banda's violent assault and the tide of battle had begun to turn in their favour, they were unable to press the advantage to a successful conclusion. "For although vigorously pursued, he retired from post to post, and like a savage of the wilderness from thicket to thicket losing an endless number of men and occasional losses to his pursuers."<sup>1</sup>

### **Banda in Gurdas Nangal**

Banda fled northwards but instead of disappearing into the mountains, he stopped a few miles above the present town of Gurdaspur and turned back to face his pursuers.

The reports of the Sikh ravages sent in to the court caused great alarm and on 20th March, 1715 a great reproof was administered to Abdus Samad Khan and he was exhorted to exert his maximum to crush the power of Banda.

On April 17, 1715, reports were received at Delhi that after plundering the town of Batala, Banda had taken his position in

1. Mohammad Hadi Khamwar Khan, *Tazkirat-us-Salatin-i-Chughatiya*, p. 176-b.

an earthen fort at Gurdas Nangal, a small village about two miles from Gurdaspur. The Sikhs made every effort to strengthen their defences and increased their store of supplies. They cut a canal and flooded the surrounding country in the hope that it would prevent the Imperial artillery from getting too close to him. This operation proved to be the decisive factor in his defeat, for, though it prevented the besieger's cannon from being placed within range, it also cut him off from supplies of food. Abdus Samad Khan who had assembled an army of Mughals, Pathans, Rohilla-Rajputs, surrounded Banda's artificial island. The besieged remained dauntless and showed remarkable courage and activity. Two or three times a day, forty or fifty of Banda's men would make sorties to gather provision.<sup>1</sup> Abdus Samad Khan, often, did not allow them to go unbruised, the Mughal forces also suffered a considerable loss in the process.

Despite the best efforts and successes against Banda, the Mughal soldiers could not get rid of the complex they had developed in respect of magical and supernatural power of Banda. Muhammad Qasim, in his book *Ibrat Nama*, says, "Such was the terror of the Sikhs and the fear of the sorceries of the Sikh chief that the commanders of this army prayed that God might so ordain things that Banda should seek safety in his flight from the fortress."<sup>2</sup>

The cordon round Banda was tightened when reinforcements sent from Delhi under Qamr-ud-Din Khan reached. When the investment had advanced a musket-shot near the fort, the work of closing it in on all sides were divided among several commanders. Abdus Samad Khan took one side, Qamr-ud-Din Khan and Zakariya Khan received charge of one side each and the fourth side was made over to the faujdars and Zamindars. United efforts being necessary, the tents were pitched close together all round the fort and rope was joined to rope. The Sikhs did not flinch and continued pouring missiles. To counteract the devastating effect of the missiles, the Imperialists threw up an earthen bank 10 to 20 yards long, before each tent, and sheltered themselves behind it in the trench thus made. So that the process might not be noticed, they closed all the openings between each shelter and before the Sikhs were aware of it, they were

1. Muhammad Qasim, *Ibrat Nama*, p. 12; translated by Dr. Ganda Singh, p. 204.

2. *Ibid.*

surrounded as if by a wall. The Sikhs tried their best to sweep the obstacle away but the Muhammedans triumphantly resisted all their attempts to break through. So bold and indomitable were the Guru's followers, that even the adversaries could not help appreciating their fighting qualities. It was feared that the garrison might by *sortie, en masse*, and by sacrificing themselves, secure the escape of their leader. The superstitious soldiery were fully convinced that the Guru (Banda) by his incantations could turn himself into the shape of a dog or cat. Thus every dog or cat that they saw was at once a target for stones and arrows. The struggle continued for two months and many lives were lost on both sides.

Even after the Imperialists advanced a musket-shot nearer to the walls, the Nawab (Abdus Samad Khan) was reluctant to take the fort by making a bold dash into the fortress and take it by storming it. Why was the Nawab averse to this course even when the circumstances for such a venture were most congenial as the Sikhs from inside the fortress were making very feeble response to the increasing Mughal firing from outside and the Khan's own men were clamouring for an immediate assault on the fortress.<sup>1</sup> The *Asrar-i-Samadi*, a contemporary work, written in 1728 by a Munshi employed at the court of the Nawab provides answer to the Nawab's reluctance in storming the fortress. The Nawab well-versed in the art of warfare and mature in judgement, "was not prepared to sacrifice his brave warriors in a sanguinary fight with the reckless enemy. His foresight persuaded him to achieve his object through the employment of superior tactics and unmatched strategy." Abdus Samad considered it more prudent to raise more and more towers and trenches around the fortress than to take the fortress by assault. "It was in pursuance of this policy that deep moats were dug and tall towers and earthen works were raised all round the fortress. The moats were so deep that water gushed out of them and the towers were so tall that a small piece of stone thrown inside the fortress did the work of an arrow. He sealed all the outlets from the fortress." No doubt the Nawab was bold but it did not seem to him advisable to risk hand-to-hand clash with the daredevils, as the Sikhs were. It is true that the Nawab could not afford to wait indefinitely for the Sikhs to capitulate, as he was under a strong pressure from the central government for expediting the rout of the enemy. His own honour was also involved. Defeat at the hands

1. *Asrar-i-Samadi*, Persian text edited by Mohammad Shuja-ud-Din, Research Society of Pakistan, Punjab University, 1965, p. 12.

of the Sikhs would have completely ruined his chance for promotion at the Mughal court. But he was at the same time anxious to get out of the scuffle with the body unbruised and his honour unsullied. He, therefore, adopted the only possible course of strengthening the siege and marking his time.<sup>1</sup>

His policy consequently bore fruit. Banda's provisions ran short, his men began to starve. They were reduced to such straits that they had to eat their horses, mules and even oxen. Dysentery spread havoc among them.

At this critical juncture, Binod Singh suggested making a mass sortie and cutting their way through the Mughal guards and escaping to the hills. Banda pleaded with his men to hold out a little longer until the Monsoon compelled the Mughals to raise the siege. Binod Singh did not agree. Disagreement caused bickerings which led to open defiance of Banda's authority. Binod Singh and his small band slipped out under cover of darkness piercing through the Mughal guard.

Banda held on doggedly but for how long could he do so? The starved Sikhs were now hardly able to stand on their feet and the fortress stunk with smell of the putrid bodies of men and animals making the place unfit for habitation. The *Futubat Nama-i-Samadi*, a contemporary work written in 1722 by Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din, an employee at the court of Nawab who personally participated in the war against the Sikhs writes about the extreme reluctance of Banda to lay down arms. He instead chose to change his tactics and instead of capitulating sought to put before his companions a plan for sacrificing his own life to save them all out of impending doom. The author has not spelt out what the plan was, but has made no secret of the fact that the Sikh leaders were un-nerved and they thought it prudent to commence negotiations so that they might save the life of their leader and of themselves.

Baj Singh, therefore, started negotiations for some sort of settlement.<sup>2</sup> Karam Singh, a later historian, however does not

1. For the details, the readers are requested to go through the article 'Banda's Fall: A Negotiated Settlement' by S. Gurbax Singh, the department of Punjab Historical Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala.
2. Was the settlement unconditional as William Irvine would have us believe? Certainly not. Irvine, although a seasoned historian stumbled on this conclusion because two contemporary books *Asrar-i-Samadi* and Harisi's *Ibrat Nama* were not available to him and he studied *Fatubat Nama-i-Samadi* only.

subscribe to this view. According to him, the initiative was taken by Abdus Samad Khan. Karam Singh was perhaps prompted to come to this conclusion by the apparently conflicting emotions which he seems to have perceived having their full play in the mind of the Nawab who was anxious to hasten the fall of the enemy but was simultaneously reluctant to adopt any precise means to achieve the desired end. Since Karam Singh has not quoted any authority, we cannot accept his argument.

The author of *Asrar-i-Samadi* which is a contemporary work, says that the Sikhs surrendered only after they had been granted safety of lives at the hands of the Mughals. *Fatihat-i-Nama Samadi's* evidence is also substantial and pertinent.<sup>1</sup> The author's lengthy narration of the whole scene establishes the following facts :

- i) That Baj Singh offered to surrender only when the Sikhs were granted safe quarters.
- ii) That Asif Beg welcomed Baj Singh's overtures for peace and hastened to convey all this to the Nawab to seek his permission for opening negotiations with the Sikhs.
- iii) Asif Beg assured Baj Singh that the Nawab was the fountain-head of mercy and his chest was the store-house of bounties and kindness.
- iv) Asif Beg asked Baj Singh to send for the present, the Guru's (Banda) son and a few more of his companions to the Nawab's court and that afterwards whatever was settled would be implemented.

Mohammad Harisi's evidence is also in sharp contrast to the view held by Irvine and supports our own view.

Sardar Gurbax Singh who has conducted a thorough study of the Banda's responses to stresses during the last phase of his resistance to the Imperialists and who makes judicious use of the contemporary works along with others, semi-contemporary sums up the negotiated settlement in the following words :

"Banda did not surrender unconditionally and that the surrender was preceded by a negotiated settlement.

1. According to the author the Nawab at first turned down the offer of huge bribe made by the Sikhs for allowing them to escape from the fortress, but when the Sikhs approached him for the second time with another request that he should grant them safe quarters and taking possession of their weapons send them to the Emperor's court, he readily accepted the terms and held out to them the desired assurance.

According to the terms of the settlement the Nawab promised to spare the lives of the Sikhs if they relinquished their hold over the fortress and that the Nawab would recommend their case to the Emperor and would mediate on their behalf."

The Sikhs accepted an assurance from Abdus Samad Khan and laid down arms on December 17, 1715. Abdus Samad Khan who entered into settlement with the Sikhs simply 'out of expediency' or to 'lure the Sikhs out of the fort' did not mean to keep his word. Various factors induced him to do so. He was afraid of the sanguinary nature of Farrukh Siyyar and wanted to satisfy him at any cost. Ambition for further rise in the Imperial service also goaded him to demonstrate his impetuosity—even his intense animosity towards Banda and the movement he spearheaded. Accordingly, he ordered the immediate execution of two hundred of the prisoners and filled the extensive plain with blood as if it had been a cup. The remainder, including Banda and his family, were put in chains and sent first to Lahore and then to Delhi.

At Lahore, they were kept in the fort for some days. Abdus Samad Khan asked for permission for presenting them personally to the Emperor at Delhi. The permission was not granted and he sent them under the charge of his son, Zakariya Khan, and Qamrud-Din Khan, Mohammad Amin Khan's son. The former thought that 200 Sikhs was too small a number to be presented to the Emperor and accordingly he issued a general order to round up the Sikhs in the villages along the route until he had seven hundred bullock-carts full of severed heads and over seven hundred prisoners.

The caravan passed through Sirhind where they were ridiculed and abused by the Muslims. They reached Agharabad on the 25th February, 1716. Their arrival was reported to the court at once and Mohammad Amin Khan was sent out at once to make arrangements for bringing Banda Bahadur and his followers in a procession from Agharabad to the palace.

### **Procession at Delhi**

On the 27th February, 1716 Banda and his comrades were conducted to the capital (Delhi) in a procession. The road from Agharabad to the Lahori Gate of the palace, a distance of seven miles was lined on both sides with troops. Banda sat in an iron cage placed on the back of an elephant. He wore a long, heavy



skirted coar dress (Jama) of gold brocade, the pattern on it being of pomegranate flowers, and a gold embroidered turban of fine red cotton cloth. Behind him stood clad in chains, with drawn sword in hand, one of the principal Mughal officers. In front of the elephant, were carried, raised in bamboo poles 2000 heads of the Sikh prisoners who had been executed, the long hair streaming over them like a veil. Along with these, the body of a cat was exposed at the end of a pole, meaning that, even down to four-footed animals, everything in Gurdaspur had been destroyed. Behind the Banda's elephant followed the rest of the prisoners, seven hundred and forty in number. They were seated, two and two, in camels without saddles. One hand of each man was attached to his neck by two pieces of wood, which were held together by iron pins. On their heads were high caps of a ridiculous shape made of sheep's skin and adorned with glass beads. A few of the principal men, who rode nearest to the elephant had been clothed in sheep's skin with the wooly side outwards, so that the common people compared them to bears. When the prisoners had passed, they were followed by Nawab Mohammad Amin Khan Chin, accompanied by his son, Qamr-ud-Din Khan and his son-in-law, Zakariya Khan. In this order the procession passed on through the streets to the palace.<sup>1</sup> The road from Agharabad to the Lahori Gate of Delhi was lined on both sides with troops and filled with jubilant crowds, who mocked at the grotesque appearance of the prisoners. Mirza Mohammad Harisi, the author of *Ibrat Nama* present at Delhi during these scenes which he described as 'Tamasha' writes, "Such a crowd in the bazaars and lanes had rarely been seen. The Musalmans could hardly contain themselves with joy. But the unfortunate Sikhs, who had been reduced to this condition, were quite happy and contented with their lot. Not the slightest sign of dejection or humiliation was visible on their faces. In fact, most of them, as they passed along on their camels, seemed to be happy and cheerful, merrily singing their sacred hymns. If anyone from the lane called out to them that their own excesses had brought them where they were, they quickly retorted that it had been so decreed by the Almighty and that their capture was in accordance with His Will. And if anyone said, "Now you will be killed," they shouted, "Do kill us. When were we afraid of death? Had we been afraid,

1. Kamwar Khan, *Tazkirat-i-Salat-in-i-Chughatiya*, p. 162; Mirza Mohammad Harisi, *Ibrat Nama*, p. 258.

how could we have fought so many battles with you? It was only through want and hunger that we fell into your hands; otherwise you know already, what deeds of bravery we are capable of."

On the arrival of the procession at the Imperial fort, Banda, Baj Singh, Bhai Fateh Singh and a few other leaders were made over to Ibrahim Din Khan, Mir Atish, to be imprisoned at the Tripolia. Banda's wife, his three years old son Ajai Singh and the wet-nurse of the child were taken away by Darbar Khan and put into the royal harem. The remaining Sikhs were handed over to Sarbrah Khan, the city Kotwal, for execution.

The carnage began on 15th March, 1716, opposite the Chabutra Kotwali, in the space now attached to the Hardinge Library. One hundred Sikhs were executed every day. Life was promised to anyone who would renounce his faith and become Mohammedan but 'to the last' say Surman and Stephenson, who were then in Delhi, "It has not been found that one apostatized from this new-formed religion." Among the condemned prisoners was a youth of tender age recently married. His widowed mother supplicated to Qutab-ul-Mulk, the Wazir, through his Diwan Ratan Chand, to the effect that his son had been unjustly seized, being no disciple or follower of the Guru (Banda) but only a prisoner in his hands. The Wazir interceded and the order for the boy's release was issued. The mother brought the order of the release to the Kotwal who set the boy free. The boy said, "I know not this woman what does she want from me? I am a true and loyal follower of my Guru, for whom I give my life, what is his fate shall be mine also." He ran back to the place of execution and was duly beheaded. "All observers, Indian and European", says Irvine, "unite in remarking on the wonderful patience and resolution with which these men underwent their fate. Their attachment and devotion to their leader were wonderful to behold. They had no fear of death, they called executioner, 'Mukti-Deliverer'; they cried out to him joyfully, 'O Mukti! Kill me first.' The most singular thing in respect of these martyrs was that they not only behaved firmly during the execution but they would dispute and wrangle with each other for priority to death and they made interest with the executioner to obtain the preference." For seven days, this work of execution went on until all the prisoners were beheaded. At night their bodies were removed in carts and hung up on trees outside the city.<sup>1</sup>

1. Muhammad Harisi, *Ibrat Nama*, p. 53.



After this butchery, there was lull for three months, during which Banda and his leading companions were subjected to torture in different forms 'to get information in respect of his treasure and of those who assisted him'. On 19th June, 1716, Banda and his twenty-six companions were led out to execution. The execution was entrusted jointly to Ibrahim-ud-Din Khan, Mir Atish or General of artillery and Sarbarah Khan the Kotwal. The Banda dressed as on the day of his entry into Delhi was again placed on an elephant and taken through the streets of the old city to the shrine of Khwaja Qutb-ud-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki. Here he was paraded round the tomb of the late Emperor Bahadur Shah. He was then offered the usual choice between Islam and death. But he preferred to die rather than abjure his faith. His baby was put into his arms and he was told to take the child's life. He refused. Then the executioner killed the child with a long knife, dragged out its quivering liver and thrust it into the mouth of Banda. His own turn came next. The details of his execution are too horrible to relate. First of all, his right eye was removed by the point of a butcher's knife, next his left foot was cut off, then his two hands were severed from his body and finally his body was hacked to pieces. His companions were also executed at the same time. His wife Sushil Kaur was made Muhammedan and given over to Dakhini Begam, the Emperor's maternal aunt. Banda remained calm and serene upto the last glorying in having been raised up by God to be the scourge to the inequities and oppression of the age.<sup>1</sup> The remains of his body were removed, with permission, by some Sikh shopkeepers of Delhi and were cremated near Bara Pula.<sup>2</sup>

### **A Study in the Character and the Achievements of Banda— Banda was not a Bloody Monster**

From the above accounts, impression is gained that Banda was a man of keen sensitivity, unshakable determination, always sincere and prone to healthy influences. He was tender in feelings, firm in his resolve and dynamic in his ideas and action. His perception was sharp, quick and correct and his disposition amiable, attractive and domineering. His personality had a charm as well as a spell. Intensely religious, he did not allow himself to be a sectarian or communal. He had a mind, liberal, broad and clear. He had a will, strong and unbending. He had a programme,

1. Elphinstone, *History of India*, p. 670.

2. Teja Singh and Dr. Ganda Singh, *A Short History of the Sikhs*, p. 103.

quite in tune with the spirit of the times and the challenges that social and political milieu threw up. His arch-type was the tenth Guru—Guru Gobind Singh, his mentor and master. He felt immense pleasure in emulating his example and giving local habitation and name to what the Guru felt and preached. He had a vision of things that ought to be and a rare clarity of the course he was called upon to adopt. Although endowed with multitude of virtues, he was essentially humble and never appropriated to himself the epithet and position of a Guru, nor did his seals and coins bore any name other than that of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. He had a lofty sense of justice and loved hearing complaints of the oppressed, the poor and helpless and punishing the guilty. His justice was expeditious. The rank and position of an offender never influenced his spirit of justice and his summary method of dealing with criminal cases made him a terror to the tribe of petty and corrupt functionaries.

The author of the 'Pothi' gives a graphic description of the conversation, that transpired between him and his followers regarding justice.

'The best worship for a king is to be just' is written in the holy Granth. Those who do not administer justice are cast into hell. A king should practise justice. Thus spoke to me the Great man (Guru Gobind Singh). If you call yourselves the Sikhs of the Great man, do not practise sin, *adharma* and injustice. Rise up true Sikhs and smite those who do un-Sikh-like deeds. Bear the sayings of the Great man in your hearts.

In fact, Banda could not be anything but a friend of the poor and common man. He, by his demeanour, earned the blessings of the poor and the destitute whose cries had not been heeded for centuries past. The so-called untouchables were made to realise that they would, hence forward, not be dispised—rather considered as respectable members of the society he longed to evolve. That was the reason that the hordes of down-trodden people, as also those who were exploited by economic-cum-political lords known in popular parleys as Zamindars or Chaudhries (as in Doab) swarmed towards him to do anything at his beck and call even against the heaviest odds.

Apart from the aforesaid qualities, Banda had another valuable attribute; he was a warrior and a general of the highest order. He was an expert rider, an adept marksman, a dexterous swordsman, an agile lance-mover and a great archer. He was

unflinching in his courage and fearless in the battlefield. His qualities as a general were un-surpassed and enviable. In the battlefield, he was very quick in mental appreciation and like Napoleon he would decide his aim properly, frame and execute his plan with speed and vigour without wasting even a moment.

A close study of his battles shows that he took pains to choose the ground to his advantage, took offensive only when he had sufficient number of soldiers, did not hesitate beating retreat against the Rajput's tendency to stick fast to the battlefield till the last drop of blood. In defensive war, he would take all possible precautions. In the battle of Lohgarh, he had put up 50 defensive posts on different ridges overlooking the fort and the enemy. If need be, he would have bastions and moats round the fort filled with water to keep the enemy's artillery and forces at a distance. Though Banda did not have artillery worth the name nor did he find opportunities to handle it quite often, yet he was fully aware of the ranges of different types of guns and the extent of disaster they could spell. Banda's strongest point as a general was that he was master in the art of waging psychological warfare before the actual clash of arms. Moreover, his mastery in the surprise attacks on the enemy was something which could not be matched by any one in the Imperial forces. It was simply to engineer surprise raids on the Mughal army, that the Sikhs under Banda used to withdraw at times giving an impression to the enemy that they were beating a retreat under the pressure of their forces. But when some Imperial forces had followed Banda and his forces for 4 or 5 miles and were cut off from their main force, Banda and his followers used to turn around and fall upon the enemy thus achieving surprise. In spite of all this, if Banda was defeated at long last, it was due to various handicaps, such as vast resources of the Mughal Empire, and vastly superior number of its forces and their better weapons, and the non-cooperation of the upper classes especially of the Hindus.

Banda was deeply religious and in order to satisfy his religious urges, he joined Bairagi sect and learnt Tantarism but the urges remained urges as ever. Their satisfaction, he found in the religious form as given by the Sikh Gurus and hence from the day Banda received baptism of the Khalsa from the hands of Guru Gobind Singh to the last day of his life when he was torn to pieces, he remained a staunch believer in the Guru's mission. He strictly followed the rules of Sikh conduct, called *Rahat*, never cutting

his hair, never using tobacco, halal meat or a stranger woman. In spite of the temptations offered to him by war, his unchallenged position and his enemy's provocation, he remained pure and chaste. As a matter of fact, Banda was convinced that political ascendancy unguided by cultural and spiritual regeneration, could not last long,<sup>1</sup> rather it was doomed to failure.

His zeal for the propagation of Sikh religion was only equalled by his zeal for war. He converted a large number of the Hindus and the Muslims to the Sikh faith but there is no evidence to show that he ever used force in doing so. Some people might have joined the Sikh fold just to ingratiate themselves with the conquering hero, or to save themselves from dire punishment, but they could not be counted as cases of undue pressure. During his stay at Kalanaur in April 1711, Banda assured the Muhammedans that they would not be interfered with in any way, and that all those who came to join his ranks would be duly paid. They would enjoy full religious liberty. They would be allowed to read *Khutba-i-Namaz* but not *Khutba-i-Sikka*, the latter being pronouncement of sovereignty.<sup>2</sup> The news letter of April 28, 1711 is self-explanatory according to which Banda Singh promised, "I do not oppress the Muslims."

There is no doubt that Banda adhered to the doctrine of Guru Gobind Singh. But some recent Sikh writers following Rattan Singh Bhangu, have laid undue emphasis on the differences between Banda and some of his companions. "In Banda's lifetime, there was hardly anything visible in his policy or behaviour that could be interpreted as schismatic. It is clear from his letters that he never arrogated to himself the title and position of the Guru. Rather he loved to be called Banda—'Master's Slave' and always asked his followers to follow the injunctions of the Guru."<sup>3</sup>

It is true that he introduced a new slogan, *Fateh Darshan*, meaning 'Victory to the Presence' but it was only a war-cry and was not insisted upon when it was pointed out to him that it might replace the usual Sikh salutation, "Wahi Guru ji ki Fateh". The other point of difference which has created some awkwardness at the time of inter-dining, was Banda's strict vegetarianism. But this

1. Refer to *Hukamnama* addressed to the *Sangat* of Jaunpur on the 12th December, 1710.
2. *Khutba-i-Namaz* signifies freedom in religious affairs, *Khutba-i-Sikka*, connotes sovereign power. *Akbbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mualla*, April 21, 1711.
3. Dr. Ganda Singh, *A Short History of the Sikhs*, p. 105.

could not have created, any more than it does now, a serious split, as meat eating is not essential in Sikhism.

There is no evidence to prove that Banda's companions at any stage quarrelled with him about religion or left him for any of his schismatic tendencies. The solitary instance of Binod Singh's going away from Gurdas Nangal proves nothing. It was only a difference of opinion about tactics to be followed in a particular situation.

It has also been alleged in the same connection that Banda had disobeyed the instructions of Guru Gobind Singh's widow, Mata Sundari, who, is said to have called upon the Khalsa to dissociate themselves from him and his activities. But there is nothing in any contemporary record to support this allegation and hence that may be dismissed as a mere fiction. The Sikhs instead of turning back on him stood by him upto the last and sacrificed themselves with him at Delhi. There is absolutely no doubt that all Sikhs were united under him and out of them he forged an instrument of Justice for the poor and the down-trodden and of severe chastisement for those who had been following the trade of oppression.

Banda, an embodiment of many personal virtues and strong faith in the words of the Guru brought his personality to bear upon the Sikh Movement and the general course of circumstances. Sikh Movement under him entered a new era—the era of self-assertion in all its aspects. The Guru had organised their followers as a revolutionary force to defend their rights and had secured for them the freedom from Brahmins and Mullahs, the freedom of food, the freedom of worship, the freedom of expression and of missionary activity. The sixth and the tenth Gurus had taught them to fight in the battle and to destroy the awe inspired by the Mughal despotism, but still the goal was not achieved. The Mughal political apparatus actively assisted and prudently motivated by the fanatic Mullahs and Ulemas obviously could ill-brook the nascent Sikh Movement which aimed at the reconstruction of society on new premises. Hindu Rajas of the hill states, as also the orthodox Hindus did not like the movement because it was likely to start a new era where democratic forces would have their play and orthodox value had to undergo a radical change. Under such circumstances Banda envisioned that the political Raj was an imperative and to achieve it, the use of force was not unethical or out of tune. Unconsciously or consciously, he gauged correctly



the role played by force in history. In fact, in history most of the important issues are not solved merely by talking, the policy of blood and iron is a 'must' in such cases. He regarded the force in the form of Sikh state very much necessary to combat the force in the form of the Mughal state. It was in pursuance of this policy that Banda organised his followers, mostly down-trodden or exploited, to serve as an instrument of force to destroy the state, thereby replacing it by a new force committed to new politico-socio and economic ideas which were anti-thesis of prevalent feudal polity and its social concomitants. To achieve his aim, Banda abolished Zamindari system which was one of the strongest props of Mughal political apparatus. This single step released and enlivened the forces that were lying suppressed and dormant. This was the reason that peasants and working class flocked to Banda to do anything at his bidding. He openly denounced the political set-up that had become rotten and then obtaining pattern of Islam that had become subservient to the State. Nor did he like Hindu Rajas of Hill states, the Brahmins and Zamindars who subscribed to the concept of *Varn Ashram* society and the polity based thereon. In fact, both these types contradicted the democratic and republican character of Sikhism and it was but natural that the Banda should strike at the roots of the contemporary society and its political structure. He fought incessant wars to establish political authority; but the forces of reaction and of religious fanaticism hand in glove with obscurantism consolidated themselves for their survival. At long last, after a long drawn-out war against the Mughals for about seven years Banda was defeated, captured and executed, and his programme of establishing Sikh Raj could not strike roots.

Some scholars have ventured to prove that Banda did not have any political motive and aim. They are sadly mistaken. In support of their view, these persons remark that had Banda entertained any such idea, five thousand Muslims would have not recruited themselves in Banda's army at Kalanaur. But to view the recruitment of the Muslims in this light is obviously historically wrong as these persons got themselves recruited for mercenary motives and Banda allowed them only Khutba-i-Namaz, signifying freedom of worship and not Khutba-i-Sikka signifying political authority. In fact Banda, nowhere allowed any Muslim to read Khutba-i-Sikka.

Even though Sikh Movement under Banda did not succeed

in establishing a new state, one outstanding service it did was that it exposed the inherent contradictions of the politico-socio and economic machine of the Hill Rajas and of the Mughals. The weakness of the Zamindari system and the sharp reaction which it could evoke among the people was fully exposed. The character of the Movement was such that it hid in its womb the dangerous potentialities which if sprouted carefully could at any time endanger the very existence of the Mughal Empire.

His failure to lead Sikh Movement to absolute success and to establish an independent Sikh rule and to bring about the transformation of social values and religious ethos does not minimise his role in the history of the Punjab. He proved that the peasants were seething with discontent, the administration had become feeble and the institution of Zamindari had become out-dated. The weaknesses of the Mughal administration were fully exposed and it must overhaul itself on some new bases if it had to cope with the new challenges which were being thrown up by the mercantilistic system that had taken birth in the womb of feudalistic society of the later Mughal period.

Banda's anti-feudal bias and the anti-feudal character of the Sikh Movement effected a major change in the class structure of the land holders by liquidating many of the big Muslim Zamindar families and quite a few Hindu land-owning families of Malwa and Jullundur Doab. Large estates were fragmented into smaller holdings and were given to the Sikh and Hindu peasants. This process gave fillip to the rise of the class of peasant-proprietors in the Punjab.

Moreover, he effected a revolution in the minds of the people of which history often fails to take note of. A will was created in the ordinary masses to resist tyranny and to live and die for a national cause. The example set by Banda and his companions in this respect was to serve them as a beacon during the darker days to come. The Hindus after centuries of subjection came to realise that they were still in a position to fight and conquer. The feeling that the Mughal army was invincible vanished and a new consciousness grew, filling the people with courage, self-reliance and longing to achieve independence.

Banda's Movement by implication showed the way to the people of the Punjab how to wrest independence if they had a mind. He himself broke the first sod of independence by launching offensive against the Mughal rule—thereby setting an example for

others to follow after him.

Sardar Khushwant Singh says, "The movement to infuse the sentiment of Punjabi nationalism in the masses received a setback with Banda. The wanton destruction of life and property of Mughal officials and land-owners alienated the sympathies of large numbers of Muslims who began to look upon the Khalsa as the enemy of Islam. Until then only the richer classes of Muslims had been imbued with notions of Islamic revival preached by men like Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi. Banda's savagery hardened the hearts of the Muslims and made them as anti-Sikh as their government."

Sardar Khushwant Singh's view when subjected to critical analysis, is reduced as historical fallacy. There was no movement of infusing the spirit of Punjabi nationalism among the masses and hence the question of it did not arise at all. The destruction 'wanton' or otherwise, of the Mughal officials and land-owning class was a historical compulsion because Banda wanted to liquidate them to foster the process of the consummation of the ideas of the Sikh Gurus and in this context their alienation from Banda was inevitable; but how it arrested the growth of Punjabi nationalism is not easy to understand as Muslim land-owning classes had contributed nothing to the cause of Punjabi nationalism. On the other hand, it is a common-place for a student of history that the destruction of these classes heralded the emergence of a new order wherein the nationalistic forces have a congenial climate for their rise. The estrangement of the poor Muslims against Banda did not signify any conflict of approach but marked success on the part of the ruling classes to make capital of their religious sentiments in order to array them on their side against Banda. This being so, even animosity of the poor Muslims did not have any bearing, even by implication, on Punjabi nationalism.

The estrangement of the lower strata of the Muslim society was made much only by the ruling elite. This class incited the ingrained religious sentiments of their co-religionists and built up the psychosis of animosity. The antagonism of the weaker section of the Muslim society with Banda's cause was not linked, implicitly or explicitly, with the growth of Punjabi class.

However, certain contemporary Muslim writers as also some modern scholars who feed themselves on the material provided by them, have stigmatised and smeared Banda in darkest colours. The author of the *Siyar-ul-Mutakbrin* describes him "a barbarian,.....



an infernal monster." Mohammad Latif calls him 'a monster of cruelty', 'a ruthless blood sucker' and is happy at his execution which he regards as just retribution of Heaven. He adds, "His triumphs are not remembered as heroic acts, but as malicious and cold-blooded atrocities. His ruling and insatiable passion was that of pouring out Mohammedan blood." The Muslim writers' view is not supported by the facts of Banda's life as they are given in the foregoing pages. In fact, these writers were so much obsessed with the loftiness of their own historical consciousness of the Muslim glory that they could not evaluate Banda's character and achievements in proper historical perspective. Banda was never a bloody monster, a ruthless blood sucker, because he had tender sensibilities and would weep over the dying female deer. He was not a barbarian, a butcher and 'infernal' monster, because he had higher notions regarding government, society and religion. He destroyed the ruling class and their henchmen, not for reasons of any mundane advantage or for any sadistic pleasure; but for destroying the edifice of the Mughal state and raising the scaffolding of the Sikh power envisaging restructuring of the society of his own ideas.

These writers have only one plank whereon they have built their argument and that is Banda was ruthless in his treatment towards Muslims during his military campaigns and felt no compunction while destroying the Muslim property. Mohammad Latif in regard to the conquest of Sirhind by Banda says, ".....the followers of this fanatic (Banda) carried on the work of carnage in the most diabolical spirit. They slaughtered the inhabitants indiscriminately without regard to age or sex. They butchered, bayoneted, strangled, hanged, shot down and hacked to pieces and burnt alive every Mohammedan in the place. Nor was this all. The dead too were made to contribute their share towards gratifying the rage of these voracious vampires. The sanctity of graveyards was violated and crops were exhumed."

The Muslim writers do not portray reality. Banda never violated the sanctity of graveyards or destroyed tombs and mosques. At no time in his career, he betrayed religious fanaticism of this nature. At Kaithal, at Samana and at other places he did not demolish the sanctuaries of the Muslims nor did play blasphemous to the holy Quran. Contrary to this, it is on record that he allowed the Muslims complete religious freedom. Even at Sirhind, the important religious places including the Mausoleum

of Ahmed Shah Sirhindi, the founder of Naqshbandi order and avowed enemy of Guru Arjan Dev were not destroyed. The fact that the Mausoleum is still intact is a sufficient evidence of the exaggeration in Latif's statement. The talk of violating the sanctity of the graveyard is also empty. The Muslim scholars have not been able to give any concrete evidence to the contrary. Banda did extern the dead body of Anup Kaur from the grave; but she was a Sikh lady and was interned in the grave by Sheikh Mohammad Khan of Malerkotla who butchered her when she resented vehemently the assault on her chastity.

The point, however, remains that he was ruthless in the pursuance of his aim, but he had to be ruthless because of the force of the circumstances. The ruling class was determined to annihilate him and to attain its objective, it was committed to use all the weapons in its armoury including religious bigotry. To combat such an inveterate enemy, audacity was a necessity and if Banda was ruthless it was only warranted by the situation.

### **Nature of Banda's Revolt and His Mission**

Banda's revolt was not a localised affair but a widespread movement. People all over the hills and the plains had risen in revolt. The ramifications of this revolt had reached as far as Iran, Toran, Qandhar, Multan and the neighbouring climes and countries. The Hindus from these regions converged in the Punjab to join hands with Banda to expel the Mughals from the land. The whole Sikh population and their sympathisers also joined hands with Banda to expel the Mughals from the land.

Was it a revolt of the peasants? Certainly, it cannot be labelled as such. There are cogent reasons for this. A revolt to be designated as, 'Peasant Revolt' should have agrarian fragrance which was conspicuous by its absence. Nowhere it is recorded that the people participating in the revolt or trying to articulate the people to take part in it had some agrarian vision. It is sometimes argued that since the peasantry came forward to take part in the revolt on a large scale, it should be considered as the revolt of the peasants. We, however, do not agree with this conclusion. In the first instance, it is not only the peasantry but many other people belonging to different professions also took part in the revolt. No doubt, the bulk of the Banda's army was constituted by the peasantry, but this alone does not entitle any one to designate the revolt as Peasants' Revolt. In fact, in the

eighteenth century, the economic issues were not so powerful as to make the people put in efforts to get them solved on conscious level. The participation of the peasantry on a large scale, however, does prove that the revolt of Banda promised something which was definitely beneficial to the peasantry and inspired hope among them.

### Was it a Sikh Revolt ?

Another question connected with it is that : Was it a Sikh Revolt? It was not a Sikh revolt, pure and simple because the Hindus also took part in large numbers.<sup>1</sup> But it was primarily a Sikh Revolt. Firstly, the master-engineer of this revolt, Banda was commissioned by the tenth Guru to lead the Sikhs as per Sikh ideology. Secondly, Banda was for Rahat-maryada to be observed strictly by the Sikhs. Thirdly, the Sikhs, who regarded Banda as emancipator, took part on a large scale, and in fact, formed the vanguard of the revolt. The Sikhs upto this time had convinced the generality of the people in the Punjab, that their programme being comprehensive and all-embracing was meant for all and not for any community or any person in particular. The society of their concept was egalitarian in composition and in thinking and in that exploitation of any kind had no room. This sketch of society was looked upon with favour by the majority of the people excluding of course the ruling classes from amongst the Hindus and the Muslims alike who were in favour of the status-quo, and detested Banda and Banda's revolt. This was the reason that in Banda's revolt, peasants, tenants and all those who had suffered excesses at the hands of rulers felt inspired by the mission of Banda and willingly took part in the revolt.

As regards the mission of Banda the contemporary evidence of *Fatubat Namah-i-Samadi* is inambiguous and unequivocal. The Sikhs, though originally provoked into action by the tyranny of Wazir Khan, took no time to make an open declaration of their design to replace the Mughals as a sovereign power of the Punjab. Since Wazir Khan's headquarter was at Sirhind, the Sikh struggle for giving their tormentors a taste of their sword also commenced from the same place. Once they had sacked Sirhind and put Wazir Khan to death, they proceeded against the Mughal garrisons in his territory and dislodged them from the thanas and put them

1. *Fatubat Namah-i-Samadi*, p. 20.

in charge of their own men. Once Wazir Khan's territory was in their hands, they began to strive for their sovereignty to be established everywhere in the Punjab.

In this process, the Sikhs demolished the aura of grandeur built up round the Mughal sovereignty represented by Sad-i-Sikandri the impenetrable wall, Raub-i-Sultani (Awe of Sultan) which emanated from this Sad-i-Sikandri<sup>1</sup>. With the thanas under their control and the terror of the Mughal sovereignty demolished completely, the Sikhs proceeded to make a more spectacular move to declare the emergence of an independent sovereign state in the Punjab. To mark their determination to do so, they decided to put a seal on their eastern boundary by declaring the termination of the Mughal sovereignty over the country under their possession.

They erected a huge grand-sized wooden tower on the other side of the plain of thanesar touching the western boundary of Delhi Empire.<sup>2</sup> According to Professor Gurbax Singh, "The practice of setting up a wooden tower was known to the Indian warriors. They called it in Hindi 'Khamba (pillar)'. The obvious implication of setting up such a Khamba was the assertion of their undisputed right of ownership to the place where the Khamba was erected. It was known in Persian history as Satun-i-Jang and was set up by renowned warriors such as Rustam and Asfandayar.<sup>3</sup> Thus it is quite clear that the Banda had loftier aim and strove for demolishing the Mughal sovereignty and raising an independent sovereign rule in its place. What was the positive content to which Banda and his followers cherished to translate into reality? Very little evidence is available relevant to this point. Nor was Banda

---

1. *Fatubat Namah-i-Samadi*, p. 43.

An Sad-i-Sikandri,  
Ke Raub-i-Sultani,  
Ibart Azost, Ruff, Jai Shorash deedah.

2. *Fatubat Namah-i-Samadi*, p. 17.

The author has no doubt ridiculed their ambitious attempts at establishing their sovereignty but has not been slow to perceive the significance of the move.

3. *Ibid*, p. 17.

The implication of their claim for setting up a Khamba was that if the Emperor of Hindustan with all his victorious army and conquering hordes, chose to direct his attention to this part of the land, the tower, should, like a cloud of dust serve to remind him that he had to cry a halt to his march and his jurisdiction ended there.

little evidence is available relevant to this point. Nor was Banda allowed to rule for long to enable us to draw some conclusions from the nature and pattern of his rule. From the perusal of Hukamnama it is considered that the revolt aimed at ushering in 'Satyug' the gold millenium where social inequalities born out of caste prejudices were to be ruthlessly annihilated, the moral virtues to be strictly followed in social context and the exploitation to be ruled out completely. Banda was to achieve all this if he had achieved success. His revolt was not the revolt of a class in the modern sense; it was the revolt of the people against tyranny and for Satyug, led by the Sikhs under Banda. The motivating factors were the general discontent and the principle, repeatedly impressed upon the minds of the people, that tyrants should be extirpated and rule of the virtuous be established at all costs. The dialectics of which Guru Gobind Singh was the propounder was clearly in evidence, operating and moving Banda and his followers to rid the society of the evil-minded persons and exhorting the people to transcend the affiliations of family, caste groups and religions to build society committed to cosmopolitanism and eradication of exploitation of all kinds.

### **Causes of the Failure of Banda**

It is at once thought-provoking and instructive to study the causes of the failure of Banda. The first important cause was that the task was too great for him. The Mughal Raj was deeply entrenched in the soil and its power was not yet exhausted. Farrukh Siyar was a strong king and he was fully determined to follow the policy of blood and iron vis-a-vis the Sikhs. Besides this, Abdus Samad Khan who was at the helm of affairs in the Punjab was equally zealous for the cause of the Empire. He successfully harnessed all the available sources of the country, deployed them like a good tactician and succeeded in holding the Sikhs in check.

Secondly, Banda's resources as compared with those of the Mughal Empire were insignificant. The scantiness of the resources can easily be gauged by a count of the weapons of war and other material which he left behind in Gurdas Nangal before his arrest.

According to Dr. Ganda Singh, the weapons and things which were captured after the evacuation of Gurdas Nangal, were deposited at Delhi. They were as under :

|              |      |
|--------------|------|
| Steel swords | 1000 |
| Arrows       | 173  |

|                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| Shields        | 278            |
| Matchlocks     | 180            |
| Daggers        | 114            |
| Kards          | 217            |
| Gold seals     | 23             |
| Cash           | 600 only       |
| Gold Ornaments | Only a handful |

According to Irvine it is clear that the weapons of Banda were at once inferior and small in number. Kamwar remarks that it was really astonishing that he in spite of limited resources, fought so gallantly against the Mughals.

No doubt Banda possessed a dauntless spirit and certainly it can do much, but it cannot do everything. It must be supplemented with men and material. But Banda, from the beginning was greatly handicapped in this respect.

Thirdly, the movement he started had, by its very successes, so terrified the upper classes that they dared not come out openly to help him. Only the poor classes of the Sikhs joined him, and their number was not very large. The general masses of the Hindus kept themselves aloof, perhaps out of ignorance and their characteristic passivity. Many of the ruling chiefs, like Chhattar Sal, Badan Singh and Udet Singh Bundelas, Churman Jat, Gopal Singh Bhaduria, Bachan Singh Kachhwaha and the Rajas of the Shivalik hills took active part against him and allied themselves with the Mughals.<sup>1</sup>

Fourthly, the inferiority of Banda's army in respect of arms also contributed to his failure. Banda's army did not possess artillery; he had only four big guns. Besides, he had no foundries to cast weapons such as swords, spears and arrows etc. Apart from this, he had no resources to replenish the depleted stock of weapons or to make good the loss suffered in battles. On the other hand, the Mughal forces were well-armed and well-provisioned. Their losses in terms of weapons or men were quickly made good. The Mughal had a refined and experienced artillery which proved very useful against the old, outmoded and conservative weapons of the Sikhs.

### **Military Mistakes**

Banda was a master of war strategy. His military campaigns were bold, well-planned and well-executed. Generally, he was

1. Teja Singh and Dr. Ganda Singh, *A Short History of the Sikhs*.



right in conceiving and executing his military designs. But at Gurdas Nangal, he committed blunders. The selection of the ground was not good because it could not be used in times of defensive warfare. The mud house of Duni Chand was a very poor substitute for a fort. Moreover, to convert the area around Gurdas Nangal into an island by pouring water into moats around was a blunder because this thing cut the Sikh soldiers off with the people outside the island with the result that they lost contact with the sources from where they could get supplies. The Mughal forces as they were generalised by shrewd Abdus Samad Khan were quick enough to take advantage of the mistake of Banda and they exerted their utmost to stop supplies to them, thinking that this would spell starvation among them and they would be compelled to surrender the fort and themselves.

Banda's war was the first of its kind. People hitherto had seen wars waged by the kings; but the sort of war waged by Banda was a war of the people against the king. Such wars are very difficult to fight. People involved in them were to be of exceptional doggedness, unique forbearance, unalloyed courage..... and tenacity to get the results. Unfortunately, except those Sikhs who had the privilege of living the gospel of Guru Gobind Singh, they were not of the stuff required for waging the wars of this type referred to above.

Another cause of the failure of Banda against the Mughal Government was the differences that cropped up between him and Binod Singh. These differences pertained to the war strategy to be followed during the last phase of the battle of Gurdas Nangal. Binod Singh wanted to change the tactics and pleaded to adopt guerrilla warfare instead of fighting pitched battle. Banda, on the other hand, was adamant to stick to the original plan of holding the ground upto the last. Binod Singh argued that since they had no source wherefrom supplies could be rushed to them and their men were already starving, it was not possible to achieve success. Binod Singh, convinced of his stand-point, pierced through the Mughal ranks alongwith his followers and resorted to fight in the hills near Pathankot.

The exit of the forces of Binod Singh out of the fortress of Gurdas Nangal had a great demoralising effect on the Sikhs. This thing, obviously, contributed no less to the failure of Banda.





**STIMULUS OF  
PENALISATION  
March towards Sovereignty**

44

## Chapter 2

# ABDUS SAMAD KHAN

Abdus Samad Khan was a native of Samarqand. He was the son of a Naqshbandi saint Abdullah Ahrar who was the great great son of Khwaja Muhammad Baqi of Baghdad. His mother was a descendant of Shaikh Umar of Baghistan. The family lived first at Tashkand and then at Samarqand till Abdullah Ahrar passed away (February 20, 1690). The search for a career impelled Abdus Samad Khan to migrate to India.

He got a job during Aurangzeb's reign and served in the Deccan; but he could not make his mark. His rise began in the reign of Bahadur Shah but particularly after when he connected himself with the family of Muhammad Amin Khan Chin through marriage. But soon the tide turned against him. Towards the end of Bahadur Shah's reign, Abdus Samad Khan pressed his claim on Prince Azim-us-Shan who was then all-powerful in the court. The prince disliked him and gave an evasive reply. Abdus Samad Khan lost his temper and used disrespectful language. At this, Bahadur Shah ordered his ejection from the imperial camp and his forced pilgrimage to Mecca.

When Abdus Samad Khan was about to move to Mecca, the tide again changed its direction, now in his favour. Bahadur Shah passed away. The contest for the throne began. Zulfiqar Khan knew that Abdus Samad Khan was a brave soldier, and his recent quarrel with Azim-us-Shan made him a still more fitting instrument for the coming struggle. He, therefore, sent for him and gave him the rank of 7000 and placed him in command of Jahandhar Shah's vanguard.

Abdus Samad Khan distinguished himself on March 14, 1712. It goes to his credit that he got ready batteries for the guns within two days and through quick and correct fire did not allow the three sides of Azim-us-Shan to be on the offensive. On the next day (March 15, 1712), the batteries under Abdus Samad Khan tilted the scales in favour of Jahandhar Shah's. At one time, under the heavy

fire from the side of besieged, Kokaltash and Zain Khan, commanding on the side of the investors were forced to abandon their batteries and seek shelter behind the walls.

At this crucial juncture, Shah Nawaz Khan with two thousand cavalry came out and made a vigorous attack. Abdus Samad Khan and Zain Khan opposed him just as those on Jahandar Khan's side were about to be defeated. Prince Jahandar Khan soon arrived with reinforcements and forced the other side to take to flight. Abdus Samad Khan's bravery and patience again saved the situation.

After Jahan Khan was executed on February 13, 1713, Farrukh Siyar began to rule the country. He attended to the Punjab affairs without any loss of time and finding the situation serious appointed Abdus Samad Khan as governor of Lahore on 22nd February 1713. He was ordered to take measures to destroy Banda and his followers and set the matters right in the Punjab. His son Zakariya Khan was appointed as faujdar of Jammu and was also asked to render his father active help whenever he was called upon to do so.

Abdus Samad Khan arrived at Sadhaura in October, 1713. He successfully stormed Sadhaura and Lohgarh with the result that Banda had to seek safety in flight (9th October, 1713). For a very short time, Abdus Samad Khan along with his son was posted to the army, then proceeding to Rajputana under Hussain Ali Khan, but on his return from this service, he was ordered back with his son to the Punjab where the Sikhs had again renewed their activities with full gusto. Abdus Samad Khan's exertions paid. He harnessed all the resources and like a seasoned general ringed Banda who ultimately was forced to take shelter in the mud fortress of Gurdas Nangal where after putting up stout resistance he finally capitulated (December 17, 1715 A.D.).<sup>1</sup>

Banda's revolt was the first to challenge the Mughal might, in the Punjab, it was not the last. The prominent Muslim chieftains failed miserably to realise the gravity of the situation. The Kharals, the Bhattis and the Dogras tried to weaken the empire by creating troubles for the government. According to the author of *Asrar-i-Samadi*, though they were petty chiefs, yet their contumacy was so sure of undermining the prestige of the empire that Nawab had personally to take the field against them.

Isa Khan Munj and his father Daulat Khan Munj of Sirhind

---

1. For details, read the chapter on Banda Bahadur.

posed another threat to the peace and stability of the State. Isa Khan was an ordinary Zamindar of Sirhind. Originally he was a robber and had gathered round himself a band of desperadoes with whose help he brought the entire territory from the Jehra on the Sutlej to the fort of Deresa on the Beas. Gradually, he began to take part in political activities also. The time was ripe for the purpose. The death of Aurangzeb had plunged the country into the throes of the Civil Wars. In the battle of Jauja, Isa Khan volunteered to side with Prince Muazzam and when the Civil War ended in favour of the aforesaid prince, the grateful prince soon awarded him Mansab. And when Jahandar Khan ascended the throne, the new Emperor conferred upon him a rank of 5000 and also entrusted him with the faujdari of Thatta and the Lakhi jungle. He soon constructed a fort at Deresa. The accumulated wealth, the powerful fort and the increasing amount of royal favours turned his head. The Imperial Officers who had been assigned Jagirs in this region could not get a penny from their Ilaqas as the rents were forcibly collected by Isa Khan. In A.D. 1718, he rose in rebellion against Nawab Abdus Samad Khan also.

The Nawab proceeded cautiously against the Muslim rebel. He preferred conciliation to conflict but Isa Khan spurned all overtures for peace with the result that the Nawab had to resort to fighting. He sent Shahdad Khan Heshgi to root out the rebel. The decisive battle took place near the village of Thara, the seat of Isa Khan, who fought bravely at the head of 3000 horse-men, slew many of the Imperialists and even forced Shahdad to turn his back. But just then Isa's father was shot dead. This thing maddened Isa Khan who threw to winds usual self-defence and threw himself upon Shahdad Khan. In the scuffle Isa Khan was killed and in this way Shahdad's prospective rout turned to be a victory. Isa's son, however, took to peaceful life and was allowed to enjoy his Zamindari.

Isa Khan's suppression brought peace to Sirhind but the Nawab's difficulties were not over. Another revolt took place. This time the Afghans of Qasur challenged the might of the Lahore governor. Under the leadership of Hussain Khan, the Afghans of Qasur held aloft the banner of revolt. The author of *Asrar-i-Samadi* ascribes various reasons to this revolt. Firstly, the Afghans of Qasur were so conceited and so puffed up that they would not show any regard for any one else. Their haughtiness would not permit them to submit to the royal commands. Secondly, they

began to appropriate to themselves all the Jagirs in the neighbouring region refusing to pay even a single penny to the royal exchequer. Thirdly, they carried depredations to the neighbourhood of the capital city of Lahore which whetted their rapacity to such an extent that they began to aspire for the appropriation of the capital also. There was another reason also. The Sayyad brothers were instigating Hussain Khan to create trouble in the Lahore province with a view to sullyng the image of Abdus Samad Khan.

The Nawab was much chagrined at all this and he issued forth from the city to chastise the impudent rebels. The Afghans too came out of the city of Qasur to fight against the Mughal forces. A fierce battle ensued in which the Afghans made a remarkable display of their reckless audacity and pluck, but they soon found themselves overwhelmed by heavy odds arrayed against them. Hussain Khan convinced of his defeat, plunged headlong into battlefield and fell upon the elephant on which the Nawab was seated. The Nawab and his soldiers overpowered the Afghans and the musket-ball discharged by Hafiz Ali Khan pierced Hussain Khan to death. The Pathan troops fled in disorder and the drums of victory were beaten in the Imperial camp.

Nawab Abdus Samad Khan was appreciated by the Sayyad ministers who issued letters of congratulations to him to this effect, apart from conferring upon him the additional title of 'Saif-ul-Daula'. On the 22nd February, 1713, Abdus Samad Khan was appointed the Governor of Lahore with his son Zakariya Khan as faujdar of Jammu. The emperor Farrukh Siyar had given him specific instructions to tone up the provincial administration to establish law and order and to destroy Banda Bahadur. Abdus Samad Khan had experienced many vicissitudes during his early career and had acquired requisite maturity to accomplish the task assigned to him. He was a veteran soldier and a seasoned general. He was a deft swordsman. He had a sturdy build and a heart of steel. He had taken part in the war of succession after the death of Bahadur Shah and thus had first-hand knowledge of the court politics at Delhi. He governed the province for over two decades. He suppressed the contumacious Muslim Jagirdars and turbulent Sikhs, but beyond this, he did not do anything. In fact, his achievements were in the nature of patch-work. He did not gauge the impact of the new forces that had emerged on the political



plateau. The peasantry was sullen but he did not do anything to assuage them. The Sikh movement with its programme of establishing pluralistic society based on dignity of labour tolerance and ability of man posed a great challenge to the Imperial Islam and Jagirdari-based politico-social system of the Mughals, and no step was taken to hamper its progress. No doubt, the Nawab had defeated Banda in the battle of Gurdas Nangal, but did Gurdas Nangal stamp out the ideology that had articulated the dormant Banda and was likely to articulate many in future as well? In fact, this was the work which a great statesman could do and unfortunately Abdus Samad Khan was not that. Hence he could only slow down the pace of disintegration. Even central government was too weak and inefficient to fashion constructive response to the challenges.

Kashmir was in the throes of maladministration, political intrigues and communal dis-harmony. The lot of the common people was very bad, the Naib Nazim had been killed by Mulla Mehtwi who had established independent rule in the province. He was fanatic to the extreme and derived vicarious pleasure by following the policy of persecution towards the Shias and the Hindus. As a result of all this, Kashmir's progress was hampered and the discontentment gripped the people. A Shia, tired of Mehtwi's policy, killed him and as it always happens in case of communal trouble, the death accentuated the communal trouble. The Delhi authorities intervened but the peace could not be restored. They under compulsion approached the third son of Mehtwi Sharf-ud-Din as Sheikh-ul-Islam. Even this stratagem could not succeed, for he continued the policy of his father. At last, Kashmir was handed over to Abdus Samad Khan. In spite of the old age and the difficult route, Abdus Samad Khan attacked Sharf-ud-Din, who was defeated and peace was established in the province.

The pre-occupation of Abdus Samad Khan in the Kashmir affairs was considered a God-sent opportunity for the Zamindars of Multan, Dhruv Dev and Anand Dev of Jammu and Baloch Saidas to have their own ways. The Nawab wanted to proceed against Dhruv Dev and Anand Dev, but owing to the death of his wife, he did not proceed forthwith. In the meanwhile, he was transferred to Multan and the operations against Dhruv Dev and Anand Dev were conducted, later on by his son, Zakariya Khan.

### **Sikh Movement during Abdus Samad Khan**

Abdus Samad Khan as it has been told in the preceding chapter, exerted his utmost to bring about the ruin of Banda Bahadur who was ultimately executed in A.D. 1716. The courage of Banda and his seven hundred and forty men in Delhi was followed by a vigorous campaign against the Sikhs in the Punjab. An edict was issued by Farrukh Siyar, directing that every Sikh falling into the hands of his officers, should, on refusal of embracing the Mohammedan faith, be put to the sword. A valuable reward was also given by the Emperor for the head of every Sikh. Such was the keen spirit that animated the prosecution, such was the success of the executions that the name of a Sikh no longer existed in the Mughal dominion. Those who still adhered to the tenets of Nanak either fled into the mountains or cut off their hair and exteriorly renounced the profession of their religion. According to Dr. Ganda Singh, "for a time it appeared that the boast of Farrukh Siyar to wipe out the name of the Sikhs from the land was going to be fulfilled. Hundreds of them were brought in from their villages and executed and thousands who had joined merely for the sake of booty cut off their hair and went back to the Hindu fold again. Besides this, there were some Sikhs who had not received the baptism of Guru Gobind Singh, nor did they feel encouraged to do so as the adoption of the outward symbols meant courting death. Those who believed in Sikhism but had not the courage to die for it, went about without long hair. They were called *Khulasas* or irregulars, now known as *Sahajdharis* or slow adopter." They believed in the same principles as the regular Sikhs, whom they helped with money and provisions in times of need and whom they would join as baptised brethren as soon as they found themselves ready for sacrifice. The genuine Sikhs sought shelter mainly in Shivalik Hills and wasteland of Malwa including Lakhi jungle in hills and forests and for some time disappeared from the scene.

All was not dark for the Sikhs; there was a silver lining even in the pitched darkness. The policy of repression resulted in the uprooting of a large number of Sikh peasants from lands and converting them into professional soldiers, thereby providing the Sikhs with a standing army with an intimate and continuing connection with the peasantry. It provided an added economic incentive and made the rising of the Sikhs like that of the *jacquerie*, the reaction of desperate landless men fortified by religious

enthusiasm and a militant creed.

The first shock, however, was soon over and the policy of repression was relaxed. Abdus Samad Khan was growing old and having a number of reasons to suppress, could not give the same attention to the Sikhs as before with the result that they came out of their hide-outs and returned to their homes. The enforcement of the 'firman' of the Mughal Emperor came to be confined to those who were suspected of having taken part in the Banda's campaigns.<sup>1</sup>

With the return of the Sikhs to the plains, their visits to the Gurdwaras increased, particularly to the Darbar Sahib, Amritsar where they held biennial meetings on the first of Baisakh and at Dewali. This created new problems for them—the problems of providing guidance to them and controlling the income and expenditure. Previously, the ultimate authority rested with the Guru. Guru Gobind Singh, however, had abolished personal Guruship and had vested it in the Holy Granth to be administered by the Khalsa.

The Khalsa's authority had yet to take shape and become the Panth, when the Sikhs were compelled by the circumstances to fight for their existence and were given no time to organise themselves on the rules laid down by the Guru.

The essential features of this central authority were that it was to be one and that it was to be exercised impersonally. Even in the times of the Gurus, its unity was emphasised by the doctrine that all the Gurus were one in spirit. In order to make this homage impersonal, the personality of the Guru was detached from the spirit of the Guruship which was regarded as one, indivisible and continuous. It was made clear again and again that the Guru, in essence, represented two things; "the Word and the congregation." A mystic unity was established between the Word and the Guru on the one hand and the Guru and the Sikhs on the other. Greatest respect began to be paid to the incorporated word, even the Guru choosing for himself a seat lower than that of the Scripture. The Sikh congregation also acquired great sanctity owing to the belief that the spirit of the Guru lived and moved among them. They began to assume higher and higher authority until collectively the whole body, called the Panth, came to be regarded as an embodiment of the Guru. Guru Gobind Singh himself received

1. Teja Singh & Dr. Ganda Singh, *A Short History of the Sikhs*, p. 110.

baptism from the Sikhs initiated by him. What the last Guru did was to separate the personal and spiritual aspects of Guruship. The one he gave to the Khalsa and the other to the holy Granth. Both acquired the status of Guru and were to be addressed as Guru Granth and Guru Panth. But how to establish the authority of Guru Panth and Guru Granth. During the stewardship of Banda, the Sikhs because of their pre-occupations in their struggle against the Mughal rule, could not apply their mind to this issue. During the period of Abdus Samad Khan, when the religious zeal of the Mughal Officers got slackened, they started thinking on these lines and found the way out. In practice the Sikh in congregation would sit together with the holy Granth in their midst, and deliberating over questions of common interest, would give their decision in the form of resolutions, known in Sikh parleys as Gurmata. Such assemblies which came to be called Sarbat Khalsa were to be held twice a year, on the occasions of Dewali and Baisakhi, preferably at Sri Akal Takhat Sahib.

Gurmatas were considered to be the decisions of the Guru and any attempt to flout the decision was looked upon as an act of blasphemy. The Sikhs who visualised the central Sikh authority as delineated above came to be called 'Tat Khalsa' to be distinguished from the followers of other denominations who held that the personal Guruship had not been abolished by Guru Gobind Singh and that the allegiance was still due to their respective preceptors.

One such denomination was Ganga Shahis or the followers of Ganga who had been blessed by Guru Amar Das. The incumbent of the 'Gaddi' at that time was one Kharak Singh who called the Sikh congregations 'widowed' because they had no one person to lead them. He himself wanted to be that 'person' and as the tradition goes, he exhibited miracles to mark the legitimacy to the apostleship after Guru Gobind Singh. His followers quarrelled with the Khalsa on the issue of baptism. The Khalsa regarded baptism of double-edged sword as the only valid mode of initiation of the people to the Sikh faith, while Guru Sahib believed in administering 'Charan Pahul' to the disciples. The denomination could not make much headway, perhaps because it went counter to the genius of Sikhism and its impact on the Sikh movement is negligible.

Gulab Rai formed another splinter group of the Sikhs. They were followers of Gulab Rai, a cousin of Guru Gobind Singh and

son of Suraj Mal, who set himself up as a Guru and began to baptise Sikhs called 'Gulab Rais' by the old rite of Charan Pahul which had been given up by Guru Arjan Dev and was made irrelevant by Guru Gobind Singh who had prescribed baptism of sword as the only legitimate method of initiation. He gained some importance in 1710 when he was granted audience by the Emperor Bahadur Shah in the neighbourhood of Sirhind. He even sat on the Gaddi of the tenth Guru. To this an Udasi saint Gurbakhsh Rai took exception and had a wordy duel with him. The saint asserted that no mortal can become Guru of the Sikhs. The Guruship rests in the Panth and Granth. Even his claim to proprietorship of the holy places at Anandpur was untenable because they belonged to the Khalsa fraternity and could not pass into the possession of any individual. The trouble ended with the death of Gulab Rai and his group disintegrated to non-entity shortly after.

To Hindalis, later called Niranjaniyas, were another group led astray from the Centre by their interested sympathy with the Muslim cause. The sect was founded by one, Hindal of Jandiala, a devoted Sikh of Guru Amar Das. Bidhi Chand, the grandson of Hindal took to himself a Muslim woman as his mistress. In order to justify himself, he corrupted the text of Guru Nanak's biography and introduced the fictitious story that the Guru too had done the same thing. This line of argument made him quite unpopular among the Sikhs, but he stuck to his guns and founded a separate sect. Later in the days of the persecution of the Sikhs, the Hindalis dissociated themselves from the Sikh movement and they allied themselves with the enemies of the Sikhs and were responsible for much mischief.

Ajit Singh, the adopted son of Mata Sundri, called himself a Guru. Mata Sundari disowned him and his movement came to nothing. His son, Hathi Singh, was also ignored. Among the old orders, Minas, Dhirmalias and Ram Raiyas had been declared unsikh by Guru Gobind Singh and therefore, they remained ineffective like extinguished craters.

The Udasis and the Nirmalas functioned as an integral part of the Khalsa and exerted hard to keep the banner of Sikhism aloft and atop. The Udasis being unbaptised and unworldly did not attract the notice of the Mughals and hence they carried on with their work without suffering any persecution. It may be said to their credit that in the darkest days of Sikh history, when the



regular Sikhs were away from their homes or were engaged in fighting, these selfless monks kept the torch of Sikhism burning. The order of Nirmalas although baptised also remained safe because their activities were mostly confined to the Malwa region which was not affected by the persecuting campaigns of the Mughal Government.

The most important sect was that of the Bandais who deified Banda, on account of his terrible end and believed that he had inherited the succession of Guruship from the last Guru. They adopted new form of salutation according to which they began to greet one another with the cry "Fateh Dharm, Fateh Darshan" as against "Fateh Wahe Guru Ji Ki" which the Tatva Khalsa was fond of. In the same way, they started sanctifying red colour instead of blue colour which was held in esteem by the "Tat Khalsa being the symbol of courage and infinity."

Of all the sects and orders described above, the Gulab Rais, Ganga Shahiyas and Ajit Singhias did not play any part in the Sikh history because of their failure to make impact on the Sikhs. Hindalis were definitely opposed to the Sikhs, but theirs was not a schismatic move, rather an attempt at establishing a parallel church-based order. They could not prove dangerous partly because their number was small and partly because they were not believed upon by the ruling class.

Udasis and Nirmalas were, in fact, no separate orders, and they were constantly engaged in popularising the Sikh faith. This being so, no harm could accrue to the Sikhs from their side. The only serious challenge to the Sikhs at that time was that of the Bandais.

According to the author of *Panth Parkash* the Bandais claimed that they should have an equal share in the management of Gurdwaras and other affairs of Panth. The Tatva Khalsa were, however, not willing to recognise any schismatic divisions and they dismissed the Bandais' claim as wholly inadmissible.

The matter came to be heard on the occasion of Dewali in A.D. 1720 when both the parties (Bandais and Tatva Khalsa) began to assert their rights by a show of force. The clash was, however, averted by Kahan Singh, the son of Binod Singh and other wise heads who appealed warring factions not to spoil the sanctity of the place (Golden Temple).

In the meanwhile, Mata Sundri who was residing at Delhi, came to know of these troubles. The leading Sikhs who were

worried on account of the malaise that had crept into the body of the Sikhs appealed to Mata Sundri for intervention. In A.D. 1721, she sent Bhai Mani Singh to Amritsar to take care of the Hari Mandir as Head Granthi (head priest) with instructions to iron out the differences between the Tat Khalsa and the Bandais. Bhai Mani Singh set right the affairs of the temple, ran free kitchen (Guru Ka Langar) where the needy were provided food irrespective of caste, creed, race, birth and clime. The savings and the income from the village lands and octroi both were to be deposited with famous firm of local bankers.<sup>1</sup>

In a few days came the Baisakhi fair. The Sikhs came in hordes to have a dip in the sacred tank and to listen to the ethereal music in Hari Mandir. The Khalsa established themselves at the Akal Bunga, while the Bandais occupied a fenced enclosure at the *Jhanda Bunga*. Bhai Mani Singh gauged the mood of both the parties and to avert impending clash held parleys with their leaders. He suggested that instead of fighting they should decide their claims by the casting of lots. Both the parties agreed. Bhai ji took two slips, one bearing "Fateh Wahe Guru Ji Ki" and the other "Fateh Darshan" and immersed them in the water at "Har-ki-Pauri". The agreement was that the party whose slip rose first to the surface would be considered to have carried the day. For a while no slip came to the surface and the parties stood in alarming suspense. But then the slip bearing "Wahe Guru Ji Ki Fateh" rose up rendering 'Tatva Khalsa' as victorious. Most of the Bandai Sikhs abandoned their stand and joined the ranks of the Khalsa. But still, the leader of the Bandai, Mahant Singh was not in the mood to accept the defeat and he gave out his inner mind to the Khalsa through Sahara Singh Kalal. The Khalsa flew into rage. Once again, the clash was averted, this time through the efforts of Kahan Singh, the leader of the Khalsa. He suggested that the issue should be decided by a wrestling match, to be arranged between his own son and Lohara Singh's son. The wrestling bout took place in front of Akal Takhat and Sangat Singh was overthrown. Lohara Singh gave up his stand and declared his allegiance to the Khalsa. The persons who still persisted were driven out of the precincts of the temple and in the scuffle that ensued Mahant Singh got killed.

From that day, the Bandais assumed a quieter role and with

1. Refer to *Bansavalinama* by Kesar Singh Chhibbar.



the lapse of time vanished into the mainstream of the Khalsa.

Upto A.D. 1721, all schismatic moves that tried to acquire the vitalising spirit of the Guru and to displace him by their own preceptors had failed and the Khalsa had emerged as a united and a strong force. No more bickerings, no more strifes among them. This unity naturally brought strength. Bhai Mani Singh worked hard to spread the Sikh religion in the Majha and administered "Amrit" to a large number of Sikhs. Nawab Kapur Singh, his father Dalip Singh, his brother Dan Singh were also among those who were baptised by him into the fold of the Khalsa. The guidance of Bhai Mani Singh roused the drooping spirit of the Khalsa and dispelled despondency that had overtaken them immediately after the execution of Banda.

Under the able guidance of Bhai Mani Singh and Kahan Singh and Sardar Kapur Singh, the Sikhs shed off the gloom that had overtaken them following the death of Banda Bahadur. Bhai Mani Singh's efforts in this connection were laudable. He, for the first time, defined very clearly the position of Adi Granth and Panth. He restored the city of Amritsar to its former position as the important missionary centre. He brought the hardy and war-like peasantry of the Majha into the fold of the Khalsa and prepared them for playing the most important role in the realisation of the Sikh political aim.<sup>1</sup> He reassured the Sikhs that there was no cause for anxiety, because the message of Nanak had a divine sanction behind it and was, therefore, imperishable.<sup>2</sup>

This resurgence of the Khalsa was sure to attract notice of the Government and no wonder the government established a strong police force at Amritsar with the twin purpose of keeping a vigil on the activities of the Sikhs and to hold them in check. Whenever the Sikhs were found in a large number they were harassed and scared away. Parties of pilgrims from different places were often set upon and looted.<sup>3</sup>

But the Sikhs could not be over-awed, their zeal for their faith was as irrepressible as ever. They punished the quislings who had betrayed the Sikhs into the hands of the Government officials and petty tyrants who had taken possession of their homes and

1. *Bhai Mani Singh: In Historical Perspective*—Punjab History Conference Proceedings 1969, page 125.

2. *Gur Bilas Padshahi* 6, 525-70.

3. Kesar Singh, *Bansavalinama*, pp. 149-50. One such party from Wazirabad was set upon and looted.

lands. The Government's hostile attitude can be seen from an incident narrated by Kesar Singh Chhibbar. One Chuhar Mal Ohri of Amritsar had two sons, Mohkam Singh and Ramji Mal. Ramji Mal had a fruit garden outside the city of Amritsar. Once a batch of half a dozen Sikhs appeared there to buy the fruit. On receiving refusal, they snatched a few handfuls saying that they would pay twice or thrice the price, but they must have them.

The matter was at once reported to the provincial authorities. A simple matter took a political turn and a military detachment was rushed to Amritsar and was reinforced by men of Deva, the Chaudhri of Patti and his Brahmin Dewan, Hari Sahai. The besiegers were, however, discomfited by a miraculous attack of lightning which struck down Hari Sahai and terrified the soldiers. The Sikhs made most of the opportunity and scattered the enemy. Aslam went back to Lahore. The Sikhs were full of joy and shouted :

"Harsa maria Deva Natha, Aslam Giā Lahore."

[Hari Sahai perished, Deva fled and Aslam returned to Lahore.]

In 1726, Abdus Samad Khan was replaced by his son Zakariya Khan, created Azuddaulah I, Hizbar Jang. What prompted the Central Government to transfer Abdus Samad Khan from Lahore is a puzzle for the historians. Ganda Singh's opinion is that in view of the mounting depredations of the Sikhs, the central Government felt it necessary to place the Lahore Government in the hands of a strong man. But we do not agree with Dr. Ganda Singh on this point, because Abdus Samad Khan was a strong man and was capable of dealing with the Sikhs. In fact his transfer was not a simple affair; it was at the instance of the Irani party at Delhi Court that did not like Abdus Samad Khan's mounting prestige in the province, as also his policy of granting posts and lands to the immigrants from Trans-oxiana which strengthened the Turani party.

Abdus Samad Khan who was well aware of the intrigues of the court thought it prudent to go to Multan, but before vacating his post, he, by means of valuable gifts to the Emperor at Delhi, secured the appointment of his son, Zakariya Khan to the Governorship of the Punjab.

## Chapter 3

# ZAKARIYA KHAN

(1726—1745)

Zakariya Khan was strong and vigilant in supervising the administration and protecting the people from bureaucratic oppression and unruliness. He continued his father's good work of putting down the Bandits' chiefs such as Pubah Bhatti who used to disturb the territory from Hasan Abdal to the bank of the Ravi and Mirmar whose hunting ground was the Doab between the Ravi and the Sutlej.

### Strict Measures Against the Sikhs and Sikh Spirit

He looked upon the emergence of the Sikhs a potent threat to the Mughal rule. He therefore, adopted very strict measures against the Sikhs. He organised punitive parties to hunt out the Sikhs from their retreats in hills and jungles. The Sikhs were arrested wholesale and brought to a public place called 'Nakhas' or market place outside the Delhi Gate in Lahore. There they were tortured and beheaded. The place is now called 'Shahid Ganj'.

The Sikhs could not lead a peaceful life. They once more retired to the hills and the forests and lived a life of great hardship. It was during this period that the Sikhs chose to beguile themselves in their own simple manners. They coined luxurious names for humble things of daily use as also contemptuous expressions for their enemies. The arrival of one Sikh was announced as the advent of a force of one lakh and a quarter; five Sikhs declared themselves as army of five lakhs; death was termed as expedition of a Sikh to life; a blind man was called a wide-awake hero; a half-blind man was addressed as an argus-eyed lion; a deaf man was a person living in a garret; a hungry man was called mad with prosperity; a stone-mortar was named a golden vessel, *sag* was gree palao; cooked meat was *maha parshad*; onions were silver pieces, pilus (the fruit of a wild tree) were dry fruit and grams were almonds. As regards contemptuous expressions, passing

stool was to supply provisions to the Qazi and wherever they came across night soil, they said that a Mughal was lying there. All this shows that pain and suffering had lost all means to them and they could enjoy bubbling humour and brightness and vigour of life. Poverty and hardship served a most useful purpose in uniting them in closest ties. All differences which arise between man and man in times of peace were effaced beneath the terrible levelling of the oppressor. An iron will, an unbent spirit and unbounded enthusiasm for their faith, were their regards of this mode of living.

Another striking feature of the Sikh life was firm belief of the Sikhs in daily prayers. As their hardship grew greater, the more frequent became their prayers. This exercised a soothing influence on their afflicted hearts and drew them nearer to their ideal. It reminded them of their goal and the sacrifices already made by the Guru and other notable Sikhs for the sake of religion. Besides this, they were very punctilious in their programme of receiving training along with reciting Gurbani.

### **Tara Singh's Heroic Resistance**

Soon an event occurred which stimulated the Sikhs to take recourse to the aggressive methods instead of biding their time in exile. Bhai Tara Singh,<sup>1</sup> a resident of the village Van was very popular among the Sikhs; firstly because he was bold and public-spirited which drew him to the forefront of every Panthic undertaking and secondly he had won laurels in the campaigns of Banda. During the present time of distress, he had shown marvellous energy, exemplary fearlessness in helping his brothers in faith. Sahib Rai, the Chaudhari of the Noshera, did not like him firstly because he was jealous of his popularity and secondly because he would not allow Chaudhari to let loose his horses in the green fields of the Sikhs. Once Gurbakhsh Singh and Mali Singh of Bharane protested against his habit of destroying their fields. Sahib Rai abused them saying "you talk of my horses trespassing into your fields, I tell you my scissors will trespass into your beards and long hair." Chagrined at this remark, Amar Singh and Baghel Singh of village Bhussa who were friends of Gurbakhsh Singh and Mali Singh took away one of his horses and sold it off in the Malwa through Lakh Mir Singh. The money thus

---

1. Tara Singh was the eldest son of Gurdas who received Pahul from Guru Gobind Singh ji and took part in Banda's campaign. He was born in A.D. 1702 and was baptised by Bhai Mani Singh.

gained was spent on ration provided to free kitchen maintained by Bhai Tara Singh Van.

Sahib Rai reported the matter to Jaffar Beg, the faujdar of Patti, who sent a detachment of 25 horses and eighty foot to proceed against Tara Singh. Before they reached Van, they were engaged by Baghel Singh Dhillon and his few companions in the village Bhussa. They drove them off, cutting two of the faujdar's nephews to pieces. Baghel Singh himself fell fighting in the fray.

The faujdar requisitioned a larger force from Lahore. Zakariya Khan, the Governor of Lahore sent 2200 horses, 40 Zamburks, five elephants and four Rahkalas under the command of Momin Khan, a cruel relentless person of dare-devil spirit. Men approached Bhai Tara Singh to flee into jungles and take shelter, but he refused to consider the proposals and made preparations to measure swords with the army of Lahore. He reached Van shortly. After a good deal of discussion, it was decided that the Sikhs should avoid fighting the Mughal forces for the time being and leave for Malwa. Tara Singh, in consonance with the decision, marched alongwith his friends, towards the destination. When they reached Bahadur Nagar and were about to cross Sutlej, Tara Singh opened Das Granthi and his eyes came across those lines of Guru Gobind Singh which meant that it was no use running away out of fear of death, if the goal is laudable and sublime.

Tara Singh instantly changed his mind and declared that he would court martyrdom rather than leave for the Malwa region. He asked only those persons to stay back who were willing to sacrifice themselves. Only eighteen<sup>1</sup> persons stayed back; all others left for the Malwa region.

This band of eighteen persons led by Tara Singh marched forth to check the advance of the invading host. The Sikhs gave a tough fight for the whole of night and wrought havoc in the ranks of the Mughal forces. But as the day dawned, resistance of the Sikhs broke and all of them were killed, including, of course, their leader.

- 
1. 1. Wadhawa Singh village Van, 2. Koir Singh village Van, 3. Shahi Singh Van Jhalian, 4. Soora Singh carpenter village Khalra, 5. Lakhbir Singh village Ghariala, 6, 7. Mali Singh, Gurbakhsh Singh village Bharanon, 8, 9. Bhim Singh and Badal Singh, 10. Mehar Singh Gill village Madran, 11. Hata Singh village Choonga, 12. Bulaka Singh village Sānghna, 13. Jodh Singh Bajwa village Nārowal, 14. Amar Singh Dhillon village Bhussain, 15, 16. Samund Singh, Labh Singh of Multan, 17, 18. Bhag Singh and Sal Singh Pisharia.

## New Enthusiasm and New Programmes

The event changed the atmosphere. The news of the heroic resistance of Tara Singh and his followers brought a harvest of new realization. The Sikhs felt convinced that if they would fight with the same bravery and courage as Tara Singh of Van had done, they could easily put an end to the tyranny of the Mughals in the Punjab. So they came out of their retreats and chalked out a programme of plundering the treasury of the Mughals, of punishing the Government officials who were notorious for their anti-Sikh activities and of collecting weapons and horses by raiding the Government stables and weaponries.

The Sikhs gave effect to their programme with determination and courage. Before the eventful year of 1726 was over, several cases of the Sikhs falling on the Government treasuries and caravans were reported. A party coming from Chawinda side with chests of revenue was waylaid and looted (July-August 1726). This venture yielded 5 lakhs of rupees. Another party coming from Chuman and Kasur was seized near Kahna Kachha by a band of Sikhs led by Sardar Darbara Singh. In the same year a royal merchant of Qandhar, Murtaza Khan who was taking a few thousands of horses to Delhi, was plundered by the Sikhs led by Sardar Kapur Singh near Jandiala. It is said that the Sikhs made a surprise attack and each Sikh leaving his thin and lean animal vanished with an imperial horse<sup>1</sup> (September, 1726). After some time, Sardar Budh Singh Sukarchakia and Bagh Singh Hallowalia made an attack on the caravan of Mir Jaffar, an imperial officer who was going from Peshawar to Delhi and dispossessed him of a considerable quantity of gold and silver and other precious material. But to designate these activities of the Sikhs as plundering expeditions without any regard for the moral scruples, is historically incorrect and indicative of the gross ignorance about the tone of the whole Sikh movement. They plundered not for the sake of plunder but as a part of their programme to paralyse the government machinery and to improve their own financial position. As a matter of fact, the Sikh activities brought forth the desired results and as Dr. Ganda Singh remarks, "For some years no money from revenue could reach the government treasury." Even during this period, they exhibited moral character. In 1727, the Sikhs fell upon Partap Chand, a very rich trader of Sialkot and

1. Giani Gian Singh, *Shamsber Khalsa*, p. 214.



dispossessed him of valuable shawls and rugs worth several lakhs of rupees which were meant for the Imperial family. But later on, when they learnt that the articles had yet to be purchased by the Government, they returned them to the proprietor alongwith the animals which they had driven away."

### **Government's Partial Success**

The forces of Government were also active in exterminating the Sikhs but their success was only partial, for the Sikhs did not live in houses or forts, but ran away to their rendezvous in forests or other places difficult to access. Sometimes, when they visited their homes at night, their presence was reported by their enemies to the authorities and they were set upon and killed. But still the resistance of the Khalsa did not break down. On the other hand, they were growing more and more aggressive.

### **Debacle of Haidri Flag**

In view of this situation, in response to an appeal from influential personages, thousands of Turk notables assembled at Lahore, where it was resolved to supplement the Government endeavour by raising a territorial army and sweeping off the entire Sikh population from their habitations in the country by one big haul. A deputation of select Pirs and Hajjis attended by a host of young fire brands waited upon Nawab Zakariya Khan and explained their object to him. This man readily accepted their cordial offer of assistance. So this unofficial campaign against the Khalsa was launched under official blessings. On the Id-day, the Haidri flag was hoisted. The cry of religion in danger was raised and all men who could wield a weapon or who wished to share in the spoils of victory were invited to join the standard. In response to the invitation thousands of mounted men assembled around Lahore, extending over several miles. The number of men on foot was still more numerous. All classes and tribes were represented. Leaders like Taqqi Mohammad and Inayat Khan raised an army of their own and equipped it at their own expense. Fanatic leaders like Tayar Beg and Murtza Khan also participated. The infamous Yar Mohammad Kazi and the notorious tell-tale Mullah Pir Mohammad ran the spot to weave their net of intrigues. The great Mughal Sardars of Jullundur, Inayat-Ullah, Rajputs of Jerawari and Rohillas from farther east brought their own contingents. Pahar Mal, a great grandson of Raja Todar Mal placed



his treasures at the disposal of the leader of this so-called religious war against the Khalsa. The huge force, supplied with guns and ammunition by the Nawab marched out under the command of Mir Inayat Ullah with the beat of drum and with banners flying.

The Khalsa on their part, when apprised of the danger, left their homes and took shelter in the swamp of Kahnuwan. The Muslim force seeing the central districts thus depleted of their fighting men soon entered to ransack and plunder them. When the Sikhs heard of the harrowing tale of the destruction of their kith and kin, they sallied forth of their rendezvous in Kahnuwan and fell upon the Muslims in the neighbourhood of Lahore and wrought havoc after which they fled to their hide-outs. When the Muslim forces set fire to the forests of Kahnuwan, they came out and inflicted heavy loss on the enemy scattering them in all directions, before they themselves returned to their hiding-places.

But the final battle between the Khalsa and the Muslim crusaders took place at Bhilowal. Scouts brought the news that the Turks were enjoying deep slumber having fed themselves to their hearts' content on delicious dishes of roasted meat accompanied by strong liquor. The Sikhs lost no time and fell on them. "Down went their 'safdarjangs' and their bullets worked with such precision that whole ranks of Muslim soldiers fell in regular array as if they were having a drill parade. They fled in terror, leaving their valuables and weapons behind. When munition was all spent, the Khalsa drew out their Kirpans and slew huge number of the flying enemy." 'Some Turks were cut down while fleeing, some struck against the trees and other impediments and fell; some broke their skulls, some lost their eyes'.<sup>1</sup>

### **Change in Government's Policy— Nawabship for Kapur Singh**

The debacle of Haidri flag naturally gave a rude jolt to the complacent attitude of the Government and now they changed their policy towards the Sikhs. They instead of repressing them, tried to placate them. Zakariya Khan in 1733, represented his difficulties to the Delhi Government and suggested that a Jagir be granted to the Sikhs and a title of 'Nawab' be conferred on their leader. The proposal was accepted and Zakariya Khan entrusted the job of negotiation to a Government contractor named Subeg

1. Bhagat Lachhman Singh, *Sikh Martyrs*, p. 105.

Singh. The idea behind this move was that the Sikhs should be so considered that they should develop liking for the Mughal political and social system instead of clinging to their resolve to evolve a new society and a new government.

Subeg Singh, a Sikh resident of the village Jhabal near Lahore, who was for a time Kotwal<sup>1</sup> of the city of Lahore under Muslim authorities, was entrusted with the task of negotiating with the Khalsa. He reached Amritsar where the Sikhs had been allowed to assemble and celebrate the Baisakhi after many years of exile and offered them on behalf of the Government the title of Nawab and a Jagir consisting of the Parganas of Dipalpur, Kanganwal and Jhabal yielding annual income of about a hundred thousand rupees and a Khilat or robes of honour for their leader. The implications of the offer were thoroughly discussed and almost all the renowned leaders of the Sikhs, Bhai Mani Singh, Darbara Singh, Kapur Singh, Issar Singh, Tharaj Singh, Karan Singh, Bhoga Singh and Garja Singh took part in the debate that ensued over the issue. Darbara Singh while giving his views against the acceptance of the offer, argued that it should not be accepted, since Khalsa is to be a sovereign by the grace of God and to accept Nawabi or Jagir would mean acquiescence in the subordinate status. Other Sardars also expressed their views and ultimately it was decided to accept the offer. But whom should Jagir be given and title conferred upon? All the prominent leaders expressed their unwillingness to accept the Jagir and the title. At long last it was decided unanimously to confer Nawabship on much-respected Kapur Singh who too was reluctant but could not go against the unanimous will of the Sikhs (A.D. 1733).

According to *Panth Parkash* when the search for the choice of the fit person for the Jagir was going on, they heard a hymn of Guru Granth Sahib which was being recited nearby which meant that only those are fit for God's grace who serve the Sangat.

They at once decided that person should be given Nawabship who was engaged in the service of the Khalsa. At that time Kapur Singh, who delighted in simple deeds of service when he was not fighting, was trying to soften the rigours of a hot day by stirring the air over the assembly (Sangat) with a hand-fan. All eyes centered on him and he was, with one

1. According to Dr. Ganda Singh, he was a government contractor. Dr. Hari Ram Gupta says that a deputation comprising all Muslim officials was sent to negotiate with the Sikh Sardars at Akal Takhat.

accord selected for the honour.

From the story of Panth Parkash by Gian Singh and other Sikh sources, it appears as if stirring the hand-fan was the only determinant but we think that this act of Kapur Singh was one of the determining factors, others equally important were his qualities of leadership, tenacity for the purpose and clarity about the goals which upto now were well known to the Sikhs. As a mark of respect to the Khalsa whom he considered as important as the Guru, he placed the robe of honour sent by the Mughals at the feet of five revered Sikhs,<sup>1</sup> Bhai Hari Singh Hazuria, Baba Dip Singh Shaheed, Sardar Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, Bhai Karam Singh and Sardar Budh Singh, great grandfather of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, before putting it on. The dress included a shawl, a turban, a row of pearls, a brocade garment and a sword. Nawab Kapur Singh looked magnificent in this accoutment. But he lost none of his native humility or simplicity of heart. The first request he made to his comrades after the investiture was that he should not be deprived of his old privilege of serving in the community kitchen.

This gave a little breathing time to the Sikhs who began to reinhabit original homes and took to peaceful vocations. Word was sent round to the Sikhs passing their days in distant jungles and deserts that peace had been made with the Government and that they should return to their homes. Nawab Kapur Singh alongwith other prominent leaders began to stay at Amritsar.

This period of peace was fully utilised by the Sikhs. Nawab Kapur Singh undertook forthwith the task of consolidating the disintegrated fabric of Sikh organisation. The whole body of the Khalsa was formed into two sections—Buddha Dal, the army of the veterans, some of whom had seen the days of Guru Gobind Singh, and Taruna Dal, the army of the youthful. Buddha Dal was entrusted with the task of looking after the holy places, preaching the Guru's word and inducting converts into the Khalsa Panth by holding baptismal ceremonies. Nawab Kapur Singh was himself in charge of this section, other important leaders being Sham Singh of Naroke, Gurbaksh Singh Roranwalia, Bagh Singh Hallowalia and Bhamma Singh. The Taruna Dal was the more active division and its function was to fight in times of emergency. Nawab Kapur Singh's personality was the common link between the two wings of the Dal Khalsa. He was universally revered for his high

1. Rattan Singh, *Panth Parkash*, pp. 197-200.

character. His word was obeyed willingly and scrupulously and to receive baptism at his hands was counted an act of rare merit. He was humble by temperament and always thought that whatever position he had, it was due to the kindness of his fellows. Once Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, who owing to having some years in Delhi, had the habit of mixing Urdu words with the Punjabi, complained to him that some of his companions had given him the derisive nick-name of 'Hum-ko Tum-ko'. "Why should you mind what the Khalsa say," said Kapur Singh, "For you do not know their ways. In their kindness, they bestowed Nawabship upon me, and might one day make a 'Padshah' (King) of you."<sup>1</sup> Jassa Singh came to be known 'Padshah' from that day. The word became title of endearment and authority when Jassa Singh as a leader of the Dal Khalsa occupied Lahore in 1761. He was proclaimed by the Sikhs the 'Sultan-ul-Qaum', or King of Nation.

### **Taruna Dal's split into Five Groups**

In A.D. 1734 Dewan Darbara Singh passed away and the sole responsibility of looking after the Dals fell on Nawab Kapur Singh. Soon after it was found that Taruna Dal who had grown in strength to more than 12000 was difficult to control in one place and as one group. To ensure efficient control and administration, Nawab Kapur Singh split it into five parts each with a separate centre. The first batch was led by Deep Singh and its centre was at Ramsar. The second batch was led by Hamam Singh and Dharam Singh of Amritsar, and its centre was at Bibeksar. Kahan Singh and Binod Singh of Goindwal led the third batch whose centre was Lachhmansar. The leader of the fourth batch was Dasaunda Singh of Kot Budha while the fifth batch was stewarded by Vir Singh and Jiwan Singh Ranghreta. The respective centres of the fourth and fifth batches were at Kaulsar and Santokhsar.

Each Batch (Jatha) had its own banner and drum and formed the nucleus of a separate political state. It was composed of thirteen hundred to two thousand men. All had a common mess and a common store for clothings and other necessaries. Nobody could go home without leave. "Whatever was brought from outside was deposited in the common treasury."<sup>2</sup>

The people of Buddha Dal were comparatively more

1. Harbans Singh, *The Heritage of the Sikhs*.

2. *Prachin Panth Parkash*, pp. 507-511.

stationary but those of Taruna Dal were always on the move. They spread themselves out not only into the Bari Doab but went further afield upto Hansi and Hissar.

The period of peace was also utilised for the spread of Guru's mission. Nawab Kapur Singh himself contributed a lot in this direction. Bhai Mani Singh and others' exertions in this respect were also laudable and according to one estimate practically the whole of Majha peasantry was brought into the fold of Sikhism by such people.

### **Government's Volte Face and Martyrdom of Bhai Mani Singh**

Soon after the aforesaid activities of the Sikhs began to be disliked by Zakariya Khan because it was never his object to allow them to grow strong. So he began to think of revising his policy vis-a-vis the Sikhs. Another factor that impelled him to rethink upon his stand in regard to the Sikhs was that at Delhi, he began to be suspected of having entered into collusive agreement with the Sikhs with a view to foment revolt against the Delhi authorities against this background.

The entente between the Mughal Government and the Sikhs came to an end. The Mughal Government began to follow the policy of relentless persecution of the Sikhs and thousands of them must have fallen as a result of these measures but a few cold-blooded executions were so cruelly striking that they entered the daily prayer (Ardās) of the Sikhs. One such was that of Bhai Mani Singh the most learned and the most revered Sikh of the time. What led to the execution of Bhai Mani Singh? Different views have been expressed in this connection. According to Sikh writers, the sufferings of Bhai Mani Singh were due to a curse pronounced against him by the Khalsa for his having re-arranged the contents of the Holy Granth. As originally compiled by Guru Arjan and given a final shape by Guru Gobind Singh, the book was arranged according to musical measures but Bhai Mani Singh had broken up this order and reset it according to the writers included in it. This view is unacceptable and the methodology adopted by the historians to reach their conclusion would not regard the 'curse' of someone as the cause of historical phenomenon.)

Nor can the execution of Bhai Ji attributed simply to the fanatical persecution by Zakariya Khan as if he was persecuting the Sikhs for the sheer joy of it. Zakariya Khan was too shrewd

a statesman to allow his religious beliefs to distort his judgement of the political situation. There is enough evidence to show that he was a tolerant governor, concerned primarily with his political interests.

In order to ascertain the real cause, we will have to view the activities of Bhai Mani Singh, a little more carefully.

Bhai Mani Singh was a devoted follower and a close associate of Guru Gobind Singh. Devotion to the Guru was in a sense his heritage, for his family could boast of an impressive record of sacrifices made for the faith as for instance, his grandfather, Ballu, fell fighting at Amritsar in A.D. 1634<sup>1</sup> in the battle of Amritsar. Bhai Mani Singh came into contact with Guru Har Rai at the early age of thirteen in A.D. 1657 as Mani Rai.<sup>2</sup> Henceforth he was to serve Guru Har Rai and all his successors in various capacities. He married Sita Bai, the daughter of Lakhi Rai, who at a great personal risk, cremated the dead body of Guru Tegh Bahadur, at the age of fifteen, Guru Gobind Singh appointed him as Diwan in A.D. 1691. He took 'Pahul' on the famous Baisakhi day of A.D. 1699 from Guru Gobind Singh. He was an erudite scholar and a brave soldier. At Nahan, he was counted among fifty-two learned men at Guru Gobind Singh's court. He made several copies of the Adi Granth and used to give its exposition at the daily prayer meeting both at Anandpur and Amritsar.<sup>3</sup> His literary interest as also his devotion is evident from his collection and compilation of the works of Guru Gobind Singh. As a soldier, he made his mark in the battle of Bhangani, Nadaun and Anandpur, besides several minor battles. In view of all this, he was held in high esteem both as an individual and a leader, in a generation that had great faith in Guru Gobind Singh and was also aware how great confidence of the Guru, Bhai Mani Singh enjoyed. This was the reason that Bhai ji's views were always given due weight by the Sikhs and he not unoften came to prevail upon them over the issues which, to begin with, were unacceptable to a great number of influential people among them.

After the death of Guru Gobind Singh and especially after Banda Bahadur, Bhai Mani Singh's exertions were responsible for disallowing disintegration of the Sikhs into different sects. His political worth was also laudable. At the death of Guru Gobind

1. Sewa Singh, *Shahed Bilas*, pp. 54-55.

2. *Ibid*, p. 55.

3. Gurtej Singh, *Bhai Mani Singh—In Historical Perspective*.



Singh, the chief problem before the Khalsa was the question of Guruship. Their earliest response to this new situation was to regard the Gurbani as their Guru. There was still a long way from the recognition of the Adi Granth as the Guru. He clearly defined the position of Guru Granth in the Khalsa Panth. In his discourses he insisted upon its being recognised as holy in a special way. He also *streamlined* the idea of Panth as an embodiment of the personal aspect of Guruship. The fact that these ideas were finally established and had become integral and cardinal part of the faith of the Sikhs shows how much influence he wielded over the Sikh mind. Besides this, he made Amritsar the centre of the Khalsa which before his assumption of the charge of Hari Mandir was in the hands of rival Sodhis, the followers of late Prithia who had been accused by Guru Ram Das as Mina (Mean—evil-minded). He, through his missionary tours, baptised a large number of the peasantry of the Majha tract of the Punjab and prepared them for playing active role in the Sikh Movement. He assuaged the Sikhs whom despondency had overtaken after the execution of Banda at Delhi. He reassured them that there was no cause for anxiety, because the message of Nanak had a divine sanction behind it and was, therefore, imperishable. He took adequate measures to keep the wide circle of sympathisers intact, without which the more enthusiastic Sikhs would not have been able to carry on their activities. In his exposition of the political aspect of Sikh movement he told his companions that the unjust Mughal rule was doomed to quick end. The attainment of sovereignty and the establishment of just rule was the mission of the Khalsa Panth. No wonder, the Khalsa catered on these ideas refused to identify itself with the existing state and cheerfully made sacrifices with the hope of establishing their own independent power.

In the meeting held at Akal Takhat to discuss the issue of the offer of Jagir by the Government, Bhai Mani Singh towered everybody as regards personal influence and veneration, and the various arguments put forth at the meeting were clearly the echo of his idea. No doubt, it was merely due to his sobering influence that the Sikhs ultimately decided to accept Jagir but his ultimate goals regarding the Khalsa that had percolated through the whole Sikh community were unsavoury to the Government.

As a matter of fact, Bhai Mani Singh had done enough to attract the notice of the authorities, Zakariya Khan, who had made correct appraisal of the Sikh Movement, waited for quite a long



time. But when the movement did not abate in spite of the most strongest measures, he thought of putting Bhai Mani Singh to death, probably with a view to depriving them of their source of inspiration and guidance, thinking little that the ideology of Sikhism as he had interpreted, had become a part of their psychical set-up and is unlikely to die out even after the death of Bhai Mani Singh.<sup>1</sup>

Astute politician as Zakariya Khan, he lay in wait for an opportunity to strike Bhai Mani Singh and at the same time to keep his moral stance unsullied. In A.D. 1734, the opportunity arose. Bhai Mani Singh who was staying at Amritsar in disguise developed friendship with Qazi Abdur Razzaq and Mohammad Bakhsh whom the Zakariya had appointed to ban the entry of the Sikhs into the precincts of the temple of Amritsar. Through them, he approached Zakariya Khan in the autumn of A.D. 1734 for holding Dewali fair in Amritsar. He was accorded permission on the condition that he would pay Rs. 5000 after the fair. Hoping that he would pay the amount out of the offerings to be made by the Khalsa, he issued invitations to them to celebrate the Dewali at Amritsar. The Sikhs responded to the invitation very enthusiastically and started in a large number from their homes. The Governor whose intentions were bad, under the pretext of maintaining order, sent a force under Lakhpat Rai to Amritsar. It was to station itself at Ram Tirath and to march towards the city just on the day of the fair, obviously to encompass their destruction on a large scale. Bhai Ji got wind of the deep-laid conspiracy and through special messengers (Harkaras) informed the Sikhs not to come.<sup>2</sup>

This being so, the fair could not be held. Bhai Mani Singh was asked to pay the stipulated sum which he could not pay because the offerings could not be made by the Sikhs at Sri Darbar Sahib. Bhai Ji was arrested by Abdur Razzaq on charge of being revenue defaulter and condemned to death. His body was cut to pieces limb by limb in 1734 A.D. A few companions are said to have suffered alongwith him. Khushwaqt Rai makes special mention of Dewan Singh who was broken on the wheel. Rattan Singh, the author of *Prachin Panth Parkash* says that he was offered the usual alternative of accepting Islam but he strongly refused to barter his religion.

1. Sohan Lal states that Mani Singh was tortured to death for his proselytising activities in Lahore.

2. Dr. Ganda Singh, *Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia*, p. 42.

Bhai Mani Singh's death furthered the cause for which he had been patiently labouring throughout his life. The execution caused deep resentment among the Khalsa and he became inveterate enemy of the Mughal rule. Thereafter the Khalsa never reconciled themselves to the state which executed their priest and desecrated their shrines.

Bhai Mani Singh's authority was invoked by Sikh leaders to influence the minds of their contemporaries. They heard his philosophy of Sikh rule and strove to translate it into reality.<sup>1</sup>

### **After the Execution of Bhai Mani Singh— Sikh Persecution with Greater Vigour**

Before the harvest of 1735, Zakariya Khan, the Subedar of Lahore sent a force and occupied the 'Jagir'. Buddha Dal was driven away towards the Malwa by Lakhpat Rai, the Diwan of Zakariya Khan. The Buddha Dal was given a hearty welcome by Ala Singh, the leader of the Phulkian Misl at his capital, Barnala. Here with great ceremony, he received *pabul* from hands of Nawab Kapur Singh. The presence of the Dal proved a godsent opportunity for him, because with its help, he was able to extend his territory and annex the whole of Sunam. After punishing the Governor of Sirhind and acquiring enough to pay their way back to Amritsar, the forces of Buddha Dal returned to Majha to celebrate the fair of Dewali there. Passing through Goindwal and Tarn Taran, when they were stationing at Basarke, they were attacked by an army of seven thousand under the command of Diwan Lakhpat Rai. They were defeated and pushed away towards Chunian. The Taruna Dal promptly came to their help and the combined forces of the Dals pounced upon Lakhpat Rai before he could reach Lahore and gave him severe defeat. The battle<sup>2</sup> was fought near Hujra Shah Muqim where the Sikhs inflicted a heavy defeat on their enemy killing among others, Duni Chand, a nephew of Lakhpat Rai, Jamal Khan and Tatar Khan, two important faujdars. The success emboldened the Sikhs who overran the whole area around Amritsar. The battle took place on October 23, 1736.

1. Bhai Mani Singh—In Historical Perspective, a well-researched paper published in *Past and Present*.
2. *Panah Parkash* (576) gives the date as Kartik 27, 1793 (Nov. 27, 1736), but since the battle must have been fought a few days before Dewali, the battle was fought in October, 1736 as Dewali fell on October 23, 1736.

The government pursued the policy of persecution with greater vigour and thoroughness. Circular letters were issued to the Chaudharis and other concerned Government officials to the effect that no one should give help to the Sikhs. Even the suppression of the news regarding the whereabouts of the Sikhs was regarded as crime. To cut off the Sikhs from the chief source of their inspiration, the Amritsar temple, was taken possession of and guarded by the military force to prevent them from visiting it. The Sikhs' sufferings were in hordes, their headquarters had been sacked and their families and kins were harassed, and above all, they were disallowed to visit their central shrine (Hari Mandir) at Amritsar. According to Kanhiya Lal, "thousands of Sikhs fell, as a result of these measures." Abdur Razzaq and Mohammad Bakhsh were deputed at the head of 2000 soldiers to restrict the ingress of the Sikhs who were not prepared to give up their right of visiting the temple. They must visit it, in secret, in disguise, or openly, by defying the order of the Government.

Malcolm says, "Some performed the pilgrimage in secret and in disguise." But in general, according to a contemporary Muhammadan author, the Sikh horsemen were seen riding at full gallop, towards their favourite shrine of devotion. They were often slain in making this attempt and sometimes taken prisoners, but they used, on such occasions, to seek, instead of avoiding, the crown of martyrdom and the same authority states that an instance was never known of a Sikh taken in his way to Amritsar, consenting to abjure his faith.

The Sikhs writhed in rage but they were compelled to leave the plains and sought shelter in the Shivalik hills, the Lakhi jungle and the sandy deserts of Rajputana. Even against all these odds, they, under the able guidance of Sardar Kapur Singh who during these years had been the guiding spirit, continued sending occasionally bold riders in disguise or openly to assert their right to have a dip in Amritsar tank. Once, it is said, Bhai Sukha Singh of Mari Kamboh came along with Thraj Singh, a nephew of Bhai Mani Singh, dashed into the tank and after having a dip, the two fled on their horses to join several hundred Sikhs waiting outside. Abdur Rehman presuming that they were no more Sikhs to give logistical support to them, followed them, but a batch of Sikhs who way-lying in ambush pounced upon him, inflicting serious loss on the Muslim soldiers and killing Abdur Rehman.

The Subedar of Lahore, Zakariya Khan, sent a strong force

under Samad Khan to seek out the Sikhs. When the latter heard that Samad Khan was pursuing them, they came out to fight openly the tyrant who was responsible for killing with torture Bhai Mani Singh, the revered Sikh divine. Samad Khan was killed in action and the Mughal force suffered a serious reverse.

Nawab Kapur Singh now made a plan to capture Zakariya Khan. With a force of 2000 strong dressed in green, their hair hanging loosely behind, the Muslim style and a green Muslim banner leading them, he entered the city and went to the Shahi mosque where according to the intelligence received, the Mughal Governor was expected to attend afternoon prayer. But Zakariya Khan did not attend the prayer. Kapur Singh was disappointed at the failure of his mission and throwing off disguise and shouting their usual cries of 'Sat Sri Akal', the Sikhs marched out of Lahore and vanished into their jungle homes. The Buddha Dal once again crossed the Sutlej and marched upto the vicinity of Delhi. On the way, they trampled over the chieftains of Jhajar, Dojana and Pataudi and received tributes from them, Overrunning Faridabad, Ballabgarh and Gurgaon, the Dal returned to the Malwa.

### **Persian Invasion**

In 1739, Punjab had to undergo manifold hardships of the Persian invasion. Nadir Shah, the ruler of Persia, during the course of conquest of Qandhar had developed strong hatred for the Mughal Emperor. After the expulsion of the Afghans from Persia, Nadir Shah had sent Ali Mardan Khan Shamlu as ambassador to India to inform the Delhi court that a campaign against the Afghans of Qandhar would be soon undertaken and to request that the Emperor would order his Subedar of Kabul to prevent the Afghans from escaping into his territory. Mohammad Shah, the Mughal Emperor replied that he had issued instructions to this effect and reinforced the army in Kabul to have this work done. After some time, Nadir Shah sent a second messenger to Mohammad Ali Khan with a similar request. But when early in 1737, the Persians invested Qandhar, the Ghelzai<sup>1</sup> in a large number, escaped into the Mughal territory unhindered and unobstructed, Nadir Shah was naturally annoyed and he sent Mohammad Khan Turkoman to the Mughal Emperor to ask for explanation of this breach of promise on the part of the Emperor. The Delhi court would give him neither reply nor the permission to return partly because of its imbecility

1. A famous Afghan tribe.

and partly because of policy. Ali Hazin says, "as soon as this envoy arrived at Shah Jahanabad, he delivered his letter and was told to wait, but they were silent to any answer. Sometimes, they were unable to agree in their own minds on the question of writing any answer at all, at other times, they were perplexed, as to what title they should use to Nadir Shah.....Thinking the detention of the ambassador a stroke of State policy, they wanted to see, if perchance, Hussain, the Afghan with the troops besieged in Qandhar, gained the victory over Nadir Shah and destroyed him or put him to flight, on which event there would be no need of writing any answer to his letter." Nadir Shah lost his patience and after the fall of Qandhar wrote to his envoy in India to return at once. The matter had passed beyond the stage of correspondence and discussion, Nadir Shah made up his mind to teach a lesson to the Mughal Emperor.

In the meantime, he received letters from Nizam-ul-Mulik and Saadat Khan, the disaffected nobles of the Mughal Court inviting him to march upon India thereby imparting added strength to his resolve of invading India.

In his attempt to consummate his design, he conquered Northern Afghanistan on March 12, 1738. Kabul came under his control on the 17th June, Jalalabad was sacked on the 7th September, 1738. On the 6th November, Nadir Shah resumed his march to India. The main body under Nadir Shah passed Jalalabad on the 13th and halted a mile beyond it. From this stage vanguard of 12000 picked cavalry proceeded ahead, followed by another body of 6000 men to guard the royal tents. Then came the centre and the rear. Passing the winter at Peshawar (which was then included in Afghanistan) and the summer at Kabul or Bamian, he was forced to continue the policy of buttressing the pass Afghans to maintain peace. In 1709 or 1710 Nasir Khan formerly the faujdar of Jamraud, was appointed Subedar of Kabul, and he continued to hold his post till his death in about 1719 when his son, also entitled Nasir Khan, succeeded him and was later confirmed in his office by Mohammad Shah (1720). This second Nasir Khan's mother was of Afghan race and he was expected to succeed easily in ruling the province and keeping the passes open.

But he was simple-minded and indolent. His chief business was hunting, and when not engaged in it, he spent his time in prayer.<sup>1</sup> Thus the peace of the province was left to the care of itself

1. *Siyar-ul-Mutakhirin*, p. 93.

and the roads became unsafe. The Central authorities being faction-ridden did not pay any heed to the state of affairs in Afghanistan. Khan-i-Dauran, leader of the Hindustani party belittled every demand of the Governor and induced the Emperor to stop payment to him which he used to get to keep the passes open. When hard-pressed by his soldiers for pay, he sent his agent to Khan-i-Dauran. He was not believed upon and on the other hand it was alleged by Khan-i-Dauran's friend that the deputation of Kabul citizens with this report had been stage-managed by the Wazir and Nazim (the leaders of the Turani Faction). Ghulam Hussain the celebrated author of *Siyar-ul-Mutakbrin* gives a graphic picture of the rotten state of affairs. He says, "Neither the Subedar, nor the Amir-ul-Umara kept himself informed about the roads and passes of the country. No guards remained on the roads. Owing to the weakness of Government, the local officials lost all fear of being called to account. None cared for any one else, none feared, none sought instructions from any higher officer. Everywhere, every one did whatever he liked. Any one who wished could come and go through these frontier roads unquestioned. They never enquired why no news-letter was coming to court from any province or outpost." The result has been described by Ghulam Hussain, "It was impossible for Nasir Khan to prevent Nadir Shah's entrance into India. The Governor was sent to maintain the administration in Afghanistan. The Subedar, therefore, sought his own comfort and lived at Peshawar entrusting the fort of Kabul to a Quiladar with orders to control and watch the passes leading into India."<sup>1</sup>

Equally neglected and defenceless was the next gate-way of India, the province of Punjab. Zakariya Khan's family had come from Ahrar in Central Asia and, therefore, he was regarded as a strong pillar of Turani party. His mother was the sister of late Wazir Mohammad Amin Khan's wife and he naturally excited the bitter opposition of the Hindustani party under Khan-i-Dauran. According to Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar, Zakariya Khan was a good administrator and an active soldier. He gave peace and prosperity to the province in his charge by repeated campaigns against rebels and robbers. But the Hindustani party who poisoned the Emperor's ears opposed all his applications to court, misrepresented his character and motives and prevented money and troops from being sent to him, when Nadir Shah's invasion was imminent.<sup>2</sup> This sorry state

1. *Siyar-ul-Mutakbrin*, p. 93.

2. J.N. Sarkar, *Decline and Fall of the Mughal Empire*.



of affairs was a temptation in itself and no wonder Nadir Shah set out for Qandhar in May, 1738.

Nasir Khan, the Mughal Governor of Afghanistan, as per usual custom was living at Peshawar. When he heard of conquest of Kabul and projected invasion of India, he assembled some 20000 Afghans of the Khaibar and Peshawar districts and blocked the pass between Ali Masjid and Jamraud, the last out-post being 12 miles west of Peshawar. His half-starved soldiery and hastily-raised tribal levies were in no condition to oppose the Persian veterans flushed with a hundred victories and commanded by a great general.

The inevitable happened. Nadir Shah left his camp and baggage under the charge of Nasrullah Mirza and made a rapid march with light kit by Seh-Chuba route. In spite of the difficulties of the route, he covered fifty miles upto 8 O'clock next morning and fell upon the Indian army in the Khaibar pass most unexpectedly from the flank. Nasir's raw levies were scattered, only his regular troops resisted for some hours. Nasir Khan alongwith other nobles was captured. Nadir took Nasir Khan into his favour and appointed him one of his courtiers on the 18th November. Nadir entered Peshawar without opposition and occupied the Governor's palace.

On the 12th December, 1738, the advance was resumed. A strong military contingent under Aga Mohammad was sent ahead to raid and ravage the country and build a bridge over India at Attock.

The Chenab was crossed at Wazirabad on January 8, 1739 A.D.

Zakariya Khan, the Governor of Lahore, though unsupported by his master had made whatever defensive arrangements he could make with his limited resources. Some ten thousands of his men, under Qalandar Khan, held the fort of Kot Mirza at Eminabad, 30 miles north of Lahore as an advanced post, while the Governor himself stood with the bulk of his army at the bridge of Shah Daula, ten miles south of Lahore.

Amir Khan, one of the dependents of Nasir Khan, who had submitted to Nadir Shah, led the vanguard of the Persians. Qalandar Khan was killed and his troops were drawn away. At the news of it, Zakariya Khan fell back on Lahore and Nadir Shah advanced to the Bridge of Shah Daula. From this place, Abdul Baqi Khan, the Persian Wazir wrote to Zakariya Khan advising him to submit and



thus avoid useless bloodshed,<sup>1</sup> but to no purpose. On the 10th January, 1739 Nadir marched from the bridge of Shah Daula, made a wide detour round Lahore leaving the Mughal defences a long distance on his left forded the river further downstream and encamped in the Shalimar garden four miles east of the city.

Zakariya did his best to repulse the attack, but by the next day (11th January) it became clear to him that any more resistance would bring no fruit. He, therefore, sent Kifayat Khan as his agent, to Nadir's camp to offer submission and beg for safety. The terms having been settled, Zakariya Khan himself went to the victor and held 20 lakhs of rupees, part of which was paid out of the Government treasury while the balance was collected from the rich people. Nadir Shah treated Zakariya Khan graciously presented him a robe of honour, an Arab horse with a gold embroidered saddle and costly trappings and jewelled sword and dagger and retained in the Governorship of Lahore. But his second son Hiyat-Ullah Khan was left in Persian train as the head of 5000 retainers evidently as a hostage to ensure his father's fidelity.<sup>2</sup> Nadir spent sixteen days at Lahore. He re-appointed Fakhr-ud-Daula, the dismissed Governor of Kashmir who had been living here in great poverty and neglect. He also released Nasir Khan and restored him to the vicerealty of Kabul and Peshawar. A Persian force was detached to take care of the forces on the rivers of the Punjab and in this way the flanks and rear of the invaders were completely secured.

Nadir left Lahore on 26th January, 1739 and proceeded towards Karnal where the Mughal forces were encamped.

The Mughal forces numbered 75000 as against the 55000 combatants of Nadir Shah. Mohammad Shah had formed his entrenched camp along the western bank of the canal with the walled town of Karnal immediately south of him. Sarai Azimabad the last station of the invaders stands 12 miles west of the canal. The first eight miles of ground between Azimabad and Karnal were then covered with a dense jungle with a single narrow path crossing it. The four miles immediately north of Karnal were a level plain free from jungle. Mohammad Shah's front and right were, therefore, naturally protected by the jungle and canal respectively. The disposition of the Indian army was the Nizam in the van facing the north or slightly north west with artillery on two sides of him,

1. *Jahan Kusha*, p. 343.

2. Refer to *Later Mughals* by Irvine, p. 333.

the Wazir in left or west, the Emperor in the centre and Khan Dauran in the right or east. The ground selected for the encampment was good from war point of view, but the army was a mob. It lacked cohesion and it had no animating soul, no unity of command. The main portion of it stood stand-still, far away from the point of impact, without contributing anything to the struggle and their vast number only caused confusion. The generals were selfish, interested only in their own advancement; they could not transcend their petty jealousies, even during the grave peril. As a result, they believed in individual shows instead of taking a concerted stand. This was the reason that the carefully thoughtout plan of formation was thwarted in favour of satisfying the whims of egocentric general such as Saadat Khan. In addition to it, the Indian cavalry prided itself on swordsmanship and cultivated sword-play and fancy riding as if war were a theatrical show. They fought with the sword only and felt a contempt for missile weapons and those who used them. The Indian Mussalman and Rajput soldiers were very inefficient in the use of fire arms. On the other hand, Nadir's army contained a large proportion of men equipped with fire arms, several thousands of Jazair-Chis or several gunners. Their discipline was strict and their fire control was of European type. The effect on their enemy was as disconcerting as it was deadly.

Even the cavalry of the Mughals was not superior to its counterpart in the service of Nadir Shah. Like their fellow Turanians in Trans-Oxiana or in the armies of the Usman Ali, Sultan of Constantinople, the horsemen of Nadir formed the best cavalry in Asia—hardy and fat horsemen mounted on the fleetest and strongest breed of horses. They were also capable archers, accustomed to shoot from the saddle and fight while fleeing. They had a decisive advantage over the Indians as men fighting with missiles have over those who can empty side-arms only.

This being the plight of the Indian army, the results were obvious. Nadir Shah defeated the imperial army at Karnal within three hours on the 14th February 1739. In this battle ten Indian princes of eminent rank, with one hundred nobles and officers of distinction and thirty thousand soldiers were slain on the field.<sup>1</sup>

1. Nadir's court historians gives the exaggerated figure of 100 chiefs and 30000 common soldiers slain and a vast number taken prisoner (Jahan Kusha, 353). Hanway shortly afterwards heard in Persia of 17000 Indians having been killed. Harcharan Das gives 20000 and the

The loss on the Persian side was 2500 slain and twice as many wounded.

After this, negotiations for peace started. The Nizam was sent by the Mughal Emperor to conduct the negotiations. After a long discussion, it was agreed that the Persian army would go back from that place on being promised a war indemnity of 50 lakhs of rupees, out of which 20 lakhs were to be paid then and there, 10 lakhs on reaching Lahore, 10 lakhs at Attock and the remaining 10 lakhs at Kabul. After making this settlement, the Nizam took his leave. On the 15th February, 1739, Mohammad Shah accompanied by all his nobles started for the Persian camp. The king of Persia sent his son Nasrulla Mirza to conduct his majesty to his camp. The prince met the Emperor at the limits of the camp. Mohammad Shah alighted from his travelling throne embraced the prince and seated him on his side. When the party reached the royal tent, Nadir Shah received the Emperor at the door. Both their majesties embraced each other and holding one another by the hand, they entered the tent, where they sat down together on the same masnad (a sort of sofa). A report was prepared and the waiter having first offered coffee to Nadir Shah, the latter, with his own hands courteously offered coffee to Mohammad Shah saying, "Since your majesty has done me the honour of coming here, we are brothers and may you remain happy in the Empire of Hindustan." The meeting ended happily and about three hours before sunset, Mohammad Shah took leave of his host and returned to his own camp.

In the meanwhile Khan-i-Dauran died and the King appointed Nizam to this post. When Saadat Khan who was in Persian camp as a prisoner heard of this, the fire of jealousy blazed forth, as he had coveted this post and the Nizam had promised to help him in getting it. He now set himself to plan to wreak vengeance on his successful rival (Nizam) and his ungrateful master (Mohammad Shah). At his next audience with Nadir Shah, Saadat told him how unwise he was in being satisfied with an indemnity of 50 lakhs, because if the conqueror went to Delhi 20 crores in cash and jewels and other valuable articles beyond

◀ Marhatta envoy in the Imperial camp 10 to 12 thousand men in one account and seven to eight thousand in a latter report (Brahme Dra Sc. No. 41). Rustam Ali says that Khan Dauran alone lost 5000 men to which we must add at least 3000 for Saadat Khan's division making a total of 8000 slain.

estimate would be easily secured.

Nadir Shah agreed and bided his time for striking his treacherous blow. On 22nd February, 1739, Nizam went to the Persian camp in response to Nadir Shah's letter. When he reached Nadir's ante-room, he was detained there. Nadir sent him a message demanding 20 crores of rupees as indemnity and 20000 troops to serve under the Persian banner as auxiliary. The Nizam was thunder-struck but he had to write to Mohammad Shah "the exact state of affairs". Seized of great despair, Mohammad Shah reached the Persian camp on the 24th February, 1739. The Emperor and the nobles who accompanied him were put under arrest. Now, the key for opening the whole empire of Hindustan came into the hands of Nadir Shah. A day later, Qamruddin Khan who was the last great noble in freedom was also taken to the Persian camp. The Imperial camp broke up. Everyone fled wherever he thought best.

Now Nadir Shah had made it sure for himself but there was no possibility of any more resistance. He despatched to Delhi Saadat Khan as the Emperor's representative and Tahmasp Khan Jalair as his own pleni-potentiary agent with 4000 cavalry to take possession of the city and palace for the victor and make arrangements for keeping order so that no part of the Imperial property during the change of masters and necessary preparations might be made for receiving Nadir in the palace. The two nobles reached Delhi on the 27th February 1739. They brought two letters from Mohammad Shah and Nadir to Lutfullah Khan, the Governor of the city. The Emperor ordered him to hand over to Tahmasp the keys of the palace and Imperial treasuries and stores and to guard the princes carefully. Nadir's letter praised Lutfullah for his honesty and devotion to his master and confirmed him in the government of Delhi on his own behalf.

The two kings then marched to Delhi. The Emperor was conducted by a rear guard of ten thousand Persian horsemen, Nadir Shah encamped in the luxuriant garden named Shalamar. Mohammad Shah obtained leave to enter the city in order to prepare his palace for the reception of the victor. On the following day, Nadir made his victorious entry into the city at the head of 12000 horse.

Mohammad Shah conducted his vanquisher to a magnificent apartment in the royal palace which was profusely decorated for the occasion. Nadir Shah demanded twenty-five crores of rupees

as the war indemnity. Mohammad opened the Imperial treasury and stripped it of its most valuable jewels and curiosities that had been accumulated for ages and brought them as presents to the conqueror. He laid at the feet of the conqueror vast heaps of gold and silver in coin and ingots valuable vases set with diamond rubies and other precious gems with a great variety of sumptuous furniture, diadems and throne including the famous peacock throne in-laid with pearls and precious stones. The Umerahs and grandees of the court followed the example of their Emperor and presented the conqueror with gifts valued at millions of rupees. Nadir being master of the treasures paid his army. These payments according to Jones Hanway were made in his own coin which was struck upon this occasion. The Id festival came on at this time and the Khutba was read in the grand mosque of Delhi in the name of the Persian King, Nadir Shah. The King treated the subjects of the Delhi Emperor with moderation and adopted measures to protect the inhabitants from outrage.

All went on smoothly, when an unfortunate event occurred. Tahmasp Khan sent Persian mounted military police to the granaries of Paharganj ward, ordered them to be opened and the price of corn fixed. The corn-dealers, not being satisfied with the rate, resisted. Sayyad Niaz Khan and several other persons of distinction put themselves at their head and slew the Persian horsemen. Exactly at this juncture, a rumour was spread that Nadir had been murdered which naturally encouraged the people to attack the Persians. According to Ali Hazin, seven thousand Persians were slain although Abdul Khan gives the more probable figure of 3000.

The next day (11th March, 1739) the tumult broke out afresh. Nadir dressed himself in armour, rode to the Golden mosque of Roshan-ud-Daula in the middle of Chandni Chowk. A person from the neighbouring terrace designedly fired upon the king of Persia. The shot missing him killed one of his attendants who fell dead before his eyes. The fierce spirit of Shah was now roused to the utmost fury and unsheathing his sword, he ordered general massacre of the inhabitants of the city. The tumult had by this time subsided but the orders of Nadir Shah were executed with such vigour that till midday, the streets of Delhi ran with blood. The incensed Persians destroyed all before them, demolishing every building they came to and levelled to the ground the loftiest and the most spacious edifices of the Metropolis of the Indian Empire.



The Chandni Chowk, the fruit market, the Dariba Bazaar and the buildings around the Jama Masjid were set on fire and reduced to ashes. At this juncture, the Emperor and nobles approached Nadir with the request to spare the city. Nadir granted the request and sheathing his sword ordered immediate cessation of the massacre. No sooner were the words uttered, than they were obeyed, the massacre ceased and every sword was sheathed. The Persian heralds proclaimed peace throughout the city.

After this, the regalia of the Emperor was seized upon by the Shah. The nobles and the wealthy citizens were compelled to produce their hidden treasures and valuables. Contributions were then levied upon the citizens. The gates of the city were closed and citizens tortured with a view to making them disgorge their wealth. Large contributions were also levied on the governors of the provinces and the total wealth carried away by Nadir as described by historians was between eight and thirty crores of rupees exclusive of jewels, rich stuffs and other valuable property including Kohinoor diamond now forming part of the British regalia. He also carried away a large number of elephants, horses, camels, valuable furniture and the most skilful workmen and artisans numbering several thousands.

He married his son, Nasrulla to the daughter of Aziz-ud-Din, the grandson of Aurangzeb. He himself felt a violent desire to marry the beautiful daughter of Muzaffar, the brother of Khan-i-Dauran, but he was prevented from carrying out his wishes by one of his wives who possessed the art of controlling his temper.

On 1st May 1739, after nearly two months of stay at Delhi, Nadir Shah held a grand court of Umerahs and with his own hands placed the crown of Hindustan on the head of Mohammad Shah and tied a jewelled sword round his waist. A treaty was drawn up ceding all territories north west of the Indus together with Sindh and Thata to the king of Persia. In this way, the trans-Indus province and Afghanistan were finally lost to the heirs of Babar. A considerable territory comprising Gujrat, Pasrur, Sialkot districts and Aurangabad (Chahar Mahal) had also been seized by Nadir by right of victory over the local subedars before the battle of Karnal and his right to their revenue was not disputed though they continued to be governed by Mohammad Shah's officers. The Governor of Lahore now signed an agreement to send Nadir 20 lakhs of rupees per annum to the Persian treasury.

As the time of his departure (5th May, 1739) approached,



Nadir sent his minister Nawab Abdul Baki Khan with Hayat Ullah Khan son of a Zaddaula Nawab to Zakariya Khan to Lahore with orders directing the latter to collect and remit another sum of one crore rupees. Zakariya Khan called a meeting of all the principal residents, merchants, bankers and wealthy people and acquainted them with the demand of Shah. Accordingly, the amount of one crore of rupees was collected and messenger with this money departed and joined the main army of the Shah now on its march.

As the whole country along the Lahore road had been desolated by the Persian army on its march to Delhi, Nadir Shah resolved to take the route by Sialkot. On the way, Nadir had to resort to general massacre at Thanesar in order to strike terror into the hearts of the peasants who had plundered stragglers and the hind-most part of the luggage train. On 25th May, 1739, Nadir reached the Chenab at Akhnur, 42 miles north east of Wazirabad. By that time, the river has swollen by heavy rains in the hills. When only half the Persian army had crossed over, the bridge of boats broke and 2000 Persians were drowned. A long halt had to be made till the other half of the army was ferried over slowly in boats and raft at Kaluwal. After thus losing forty days, Nadir himself crossed the river last on 3rd July, and resumed his march. At this juncture, Zakariya Khan was permitted to leave the camp and depart to the seat of his government. Anandram writes that Nadir was much pleased with his devotion and ability and asked him to name any favour that he liked. The Khan very nobly begged for the release of Indian captives taken away from Delhi by the Persian army. These were now set free by Nadir's orders.<sup>1</sup> Then by way of Hasan Abdal and Khaibar Pass, the Persians returned to Kabul (20th November, 1739). The same year he marched his army into Sindh which he subdued. At Sindh, he summoned Nawab Zakariya Khan to help him in conducting war against the refractory Balochis. He celebrated festival of the New Year at Larkana in Sindh with great pomp and show and gave varied presents to his army. After these transactions Zakariya Khan was sent back to Lahore and Nadir Shah at the head of troops proceeded to Qandhar.

1. Many historians credit Zakariya Khan having secured from Nadir Shah the liberation of thousands of captives with Hindus and Muslims, but Khushwaqt Rai and the author of *Saadat-jarid* would make Lakhpat Rai share this credit with the Nawab. Khushwaqt Rai, pp. 73-74.

### **Sequel of Nadir's Invasion**

Nadir's invasion was of far-reaching consequences for India including Punjab. It spread ruin and disorder throughout the province. At Attock, he had instructed his vanguard to plunder and ravage without mercy. According to Anandram, cities like Wazirabad, Eminabad and Gujrat etc. and big villages were reduced to black ashes. All over, the land proper was plundered and women outraged. Tilok Das bears witness to the plunder of Lahore, Jullundur and other towns on his route. Just after the defeat of the Mughal armies at Karnal, the territory adjoining the road from Karnal to Delhi was ravaged. Panipat, Sonapat and other towns lying on the way were sacked. The territory around the capital city of Delhi stretching for about 30 to 40 miles was plundered completely, laying the fields waste and killing the inhabitants who resisted. This wanton destruction on a large scale disrupted the economic life of the province. The individual centres at Sialkot, Gujrat and other cities suffered loss beyond repairs as the artisans left these places in search of new and safe abodes with the result that for a long time after the invasion, normalcy could not be restored to the industrial life of the towns. The peasants also took time to recover from the shock of the invasion to resume work on their fields.

The political machinery was also thrown out of gear. During the period of the invasion, there was practically no government in the province. The oppressors and predatory classes, so long controlled by government, raised their heads when they saw that the government was in doldrum and is facing a dilemma for survival. Sheikh Ali Hazin describes that the whole of province was in complete revolution. Every person put forth his hand to plunder and pillage and some thousands of robbers beset the public roads.....the whole of that time, whether on the roads or at the halting stations passed in fighting and contention. According to J.N. Sarkar, "The country was first sacked by the Persian soldiers under orders and then by the lawless natives. Everywhere robbery and murder took place, gangs of robbers closed the roads to trade and peaceful traffic, everyone fought everyone else. Utter desolation and disorder seized the province."

Another important political effect of the invasion was that owing to the annexation of the trans-Indus provinces, a strong foreign power entrenched itself in constantly impinging on our

Western Frontier. With the Khaibar Pass and Peshawar district in foreign hands, the Punjab became a starting point for fresh expeditions against Delhi. And the fresh danger of expedition always lurked because Nadir's invasion had exposed the weakness of the Mughal empire. No wonder, the Abdali and his dynasty continued Nadir's work in India as the heir to his empire. In the changed political context, Punjab had to bear the brunt and suffer a lot in the process.

This invasion affected on the relations between Punjab and the centre as well. Technically speaking, Zakariya Khan had to serve two masters. By virtue of the treaty concluded between Mohammad Shah and Nadir Shah, Punjab like other provinces passed under the suzerainty of Mohammad Shah. But on account of the separate agreement arrived at between Nadir and Zakariya Khan. Zakariya Khan accepted the suzerainty of Nadir Shah in so far as the districts of Gujrat, Pasrur, Sialkot and the districts under the Zamindars of Aurangabad were concerned. In view of this, it is not difficult to surmise that Zakariya Khan cared more for Nadir Shah than Mohammad Shah, the former being stronger than the latter. Even after the death of Nadir Shah, Zakariya Khan cared little for Mohammad Shah as he had not been able either to shed of his own imbecility or to curb the faction-riven nobility of his court. Indeed, there was no reason why there should be a restoration of the Imperial power and prestige while the character of the Emperor and his nobles continued to be as bad as before.

This was the time when the provincial governments suffered crisis of faith in the central authorities. The governorship had, for some time past come to be permanently settled in particular families whose members in almost all the transaction were guided by their own personal interests and not unoften, entered into political negotiations with foreign powers, even with the enemies of the empire without any reference to the imperial headquarters. Under the circumstances, Zakariya Khan developed the propensity to pay only lip service to the central authorities and began to rule over the province almost independently. Contemporary Mughal records show that in appointment of Dewan and in other matters, where it was obligatory for the provincial governors to consult the central authority, the viceroy acted on his own.

Owing to the colossal disorder that seized the Punjab as a consequence of the Nadir's invasion, the Sikhs acquired strength.

They spread over the territory between the Ravi and the Beas as well as the forests of Majha. They harassed the routes of communication and moving about in small lands plundered the enemy's property and villages, thereby improving their financial as well as military position. They increased in number and strength. They built a small fort at Dallewal on the Ravi for purposes of refuge and retreat. Encouraged by their initial successes, they started attending Hari Mandir and holding councils among themselves. Sikh horsemen were seen riding at full gallop towards their favourite shrine at Amritsar, the pilgrimage being no longer performed in secret or in disguise as before. Nadir Shah, while passing through the Punjab on his return from Delhi asked Zakariya Khan what sort of people the Sikhs were who had plundered the rear of his army which was laden of spoils. Zakariya replied that they were a crowd of disorderly faqirs which visited the tank of Amritsar twice a year. Nadir asked where their abodes were. Zakariya replied, "Their houses are their saddles." The conqueror smiled and said, "Surely they ought to be crushed and their country seized."

### **Post-Persian invasion Period**

For about six years after the departure of Nadir Shah, Zakariya Khan ruled over the province. During this period he faced a very difficult situation. Nadir's invasion had put the machinery out of gear. Many of the principal towns and villages had been ravaged. Trade and business had been brought to standstill. Lawless element had shed off fear of the authorities. The central government having grown decrepit and diffident was unable to render him army assistance nor could he expect any help from Nadir Shah because of his pre-occupation elsewhere. He had to depend upon his own resources and courage. That he exerted to the utmost to restore peace and stability to the province without getting help from any quarter was symptomatic of his concern for the province as also of his desire to be de-facto master of the situation.

He dealt with the contumacious people with firmness and strictness. He decimated the lawless element. He set the administrative machinery in order and inducted vigour into it. He, being a man of probity and uprightness, did not allow himself to be swayed by communal feelings which the bigoted Mullahs of Lahore were in the habit of arousing. He saw everything from

administrative point of view, and no amount of provocation or allurements could give a slant to his stand in favour of communalism. His justice was proverbial; religious considerations did not colour his judgement. In those days, the narrow-minded Mullahs of Lahore were accustomed to provoking quarrels with the Hindus on religious subjects, but Zakariya always tried to settle these disputes amicably and never showed undue favour to any side.

A Hindu of Lahore had the misfortune to possess a beautiful wife. A Mughal residing in the same locality became enamoured of her and tried to secure her affection but the modest woman remained loyal to her husband and rejected the Mughal's overtures with scorn. The latter thereupon resolved to obtain by stratagem what he had failed to do by persuasion. He contrived to secretly introduce garments such as worn by a Mohammedan bride into the woman's apartment to prove his secret alliance with her. But his viles were laid bare by the governor who in the guise of a faqir ascertained the actual state of affairs and ordered the Mughal to be put to death. This anecdote amply vindicates standard of justice, Zakariya Khan tried to keep up.

He was conscious of the sad plight of the finances of the state. The finances of the Punjab Government had been constantly falling since 1739 in consequence of the disorders created by the Persian invasion, the Sikhs and the Viceroy's light cavalry bands who marching in pursuit of the Sikhs had impoverished the peasantry by their extortion, particularly in view of the fact that the soldiers were clamouring for their salaries. Zakariya Khan resorted to the palliatives as well as long term plan. In the former category fell his resolve to make the Jagirdars and nobles disgorge a part of their accumulated wealth. He put Dewan Lakhpat Rai in prison for his failure to clear the dues of the army. His brother Jaspal Rai secured his release on promise to pay the troops all their dues. He contributed a large sum of money from his personal treasure and for the remaining amount he obtained order to check the accounts of all the court nobles in order to find out if they had paid all their dues to the state.

As per Zakariya's permission, Mumin Khan the leader of the Turani nobles at the court of Lahore was requested to render the accounts of his land proceeds but he refused to comply with the request. At this, the Khan Bahadur administered him a sharp

rebuke which frightened him so much that he at once paid one lakh of rupees to the state exchequer. This example had a deterring effect and other nobles including Adina Beg who also paid their arrears to the Government.

His long-term remedial measure to set the finances of the province on sound footing was that he leased out the land to Ijaradars (farmers of revenue). This remedy was worse than the disease itself. It proved impolitic and unwise as it let loose the forces of disorder in all parts of the province on account of the severity and maltreatment of the cultivators by these revenue farmers.<sup>1</sup> In fact the problem remained as baffling as it was before although its temporary political response was the relaxation of the severity which formed the nexus of the policy of the Government towards the Sikhs.

### **Zakariya Khan vis-a-vis Sikh Movement— Post Persian-invasion Period**

During Nadir's invasion, the Government machinery of the Punjab as also of Delhi was thrown out of gear. The opportunity was made most of by the Khalsa who descended on the plains from their hide-outs in the hills and jungles and started giving strong blows to the already tattered administration. They built a mud fort at Dallewal<sup>2</sup> to serve them as a post of retreat and also of formation. When Nadir Shah was returning home in the early months of 1739 after a hearty plunder of Delhi and Punjab, the Khalsa swooped down upon the rearguard in the neighbourhood of Akhnur, relieving the invaders of much of their booty. On the third night they made an even fiercer attack and rescued from their hands large number of Hindu girls who were restored to their families. For many a long mile, the Sikhs pursued Nadir in this manner.

During his stay at Akhnur, Nadir, on being told that a Sikh's dwelling place is the saddle of horse and he must visit the tank of nectar twice a year on the occasion of Baisakhi and Dewali irrespective of any danger of any magnitude, warned Zakariya Khan, "The day is not distant when these rebels will take

1. M. George, p. 114.

2. Dallewal was conveniently situated in the centre of a dense forest to the North-West of Amritsar on the bank of Ravi and commanded a rich and fertile tract of land called Riyarki. Malcolm, *Sketches from Sikh History*, p. 68



possession of the country."<sup>1</sup>

This remark of Nadir Shah who was famous for his sense of perception and sound judgement went deep into Zakariya's heart and he resolved to launch an all-out campaign against the Sikhs. In fact, Nadir's invasion is a landmark in the history of the Punjab in the sense that hereafter the Mughal Government renewed their persecution of the Sikhs with greater vigour, alacrity and determination to smash the Sikhs out of existence. This policy was continued for about seven years during the Zakariya's regime and that of Yahiya Khan. Sardar Karam Singh historian views this wave of persecution as the second one. Zakariya Khan lost no time in taking offensive against the Sikhs. He had the fortress at Dallewal blown up and ordered village officials to round up Sikhs and hand them over for execution. He organised moving columns of light cavalry and put them in motion in pursuit of the Sikhs. Side by side the military measures, the Government made use of its civil machinery. Instructions were issued to local officials and village headmen to round up Sikhs and hand them over for execution. All evasions of these Zakariya Khan's injunctions were severely punished. Zakariya's police covered the country and brought back hundreds of Sikhs in chains. They were publicly beheaded at the *Nakbas*, the horse market of Lahore, since then named Shahid Ganj (place of martyrdom) in memory of the dead.

When the Sikh Bodies saw the determined attitude of Zakariya Khan, they quitted the Bari Doab and moved to the Jullundur Doab, but there also Zakariya did not let them live in peace. In order to oust the Sikhs from Jullundur Doab, the Governor despatched Adina Beg Khan, a seasoned military general to the territory of the Jullundur Doab. Adina Beg did succeed in restoring peace and order in the area, but he did not take steps to crush the Sikhs altogether although he could achieve a large measure of success he wanted. In fact, he had this thing in his mind that if he quelled the Sikhs, some other contractor might be entrusted with the Government of the Doab for a higher sum and

---

Ahmed Shah Butalia, *Tarikh-i-Hind*, p. 859. Forster writing about 40 years later, has alluded to this incident in the following words, "The Sicque forces appeared in arms at the period of Nadir Shah's return from Delhi, when the Persian Army encumbered with spoil and regardless of order, was attacked in the rear by detached predatory parties of Sicque cavalry who occasionally fell upon the baggage guards, and acquired a large plunder. (Forster, January I. 313).

he might be dismissed. For this reason, the Sikhs grew stronger and they gradually occupied many villages in his Jagir.<sup>1</sup>

Zakariya Khan who was very vigilant issued strict instructions to Adina Beg to drive away the Sikhs. Adina Beg had to abide by the instructions and he told the Sikhs to evacuate the territory. The Sikhs at this juncture sent one of their leaders Jassa Singh Ramgarhia to negotiate with Adina Beg. The latter proved to be too shrewd for the Sikh's pleni-potentiary and persuaded him to accept an office under the Government. Dismayed and disappointed at this, the Sikhs crossed the Sutlej and entered the Sirhind Sarkar.

There also they created a serious situation for the Delhi Government. In 1740, a large body of Jats and Sikhs set up Dharnat Shah as their leader and marched towards Sirhind. When this disquieting news reached Delhi, Mohammad Shah appointed Azimullah Khan to chastise these rebels. Azimullah reached the trouble spot, defeated and dispersed the Sikhs and then retired to Shah Jahan Abad (Delhi).

The Sikhs suffered terrible hardships, but they remained as defiant as ever and developed a peculiar spirit of bravado which enabled them to face adversary. Zakariya Khan, undaunted in his resolve to annihilate the Sikhs totally, issued a regular schedule of rewards for those who would render assistance to the Government to stamp out the Sikh movement. Zakariya made head-hunting a profitable business by offering a gradescala of rewards—a blanket and a bedding for cutting off the hair of Sikhs, ten rupees for supplying information regarding the whereabouts of a Sikh's scalp. Plunder of the Sikh homes was made lawful, giving shelter to the Sikhs or withholding information regarding them was made capital offence.<sup>2</sup>

Day by day the sufferings of the Sikhs multiplied. The whole machinery of the Government including Chaudharies and Muqaddams etc. operated with assiduity to crush the Sikhs. Karma of Chhina, Rama Randhawa of Talwandi, Sahib Rai Sandhu of

- 
1. Refer to the footnote on page 8 of the *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. I, by Dr. Hari Ram Gupta.
  2. Bhangu, Rattan Singh, *Prachin Panth Parkash*, pp. 284-85. Gordon on page 50 of his *History of the Sikhs* writes, "A proclamation was issued by the Lahore Viceroy ordering a general massacre of the long haired Sikhs wherever found. They were hunted like wild beasts a price being placed on their heads. Thousands were put to death refusing pardon on the condition of renouncing their faith."

Nowshera Dalla, Massa Rangar of Mandiala, Bhagat Naranjania of Jandiala were notorious for their Sikh hunting expedition. On spotting the area of these Chaudharies on the map, it will be clear that these Chaudharies formed almost a circle round Amritsar. There was only one Chaudhari in the series, the Chaudhari of Jhabhal who was not inimical towards the Sikhs, although he too was not their warm-blooded friend. These Chaudharies were over-loyal to the Government and their strict surveillance continued with quick action against the Sikhs. They did not allow the retiring Sikhs to have a breath of relief. The Sikhs thought it politic to go to their resorts in the hills of Jammu and Kangra, in the deserts of Bikaner and in Malwa and Lakhi Jungle. Quite a large number of them got employment at Jaipur. It appeared at least for some time, that the policy of Zakariya had succeeded but soon the reality dawned upon the Government. The Sikhs' morale was as strong as ever.

### **Massa Rangar's Murder by Mehtab Singh**

Massa Rangar turned the holy precincts into stable and the inmost sanctuary into a dancing hall where he used to drink, smoke and enjoy the dance of ill-reputed women. The news of this desecration reached a party of the Sikhs residing at Jaipur. One of them Mehtab Singh Miran Kotia (the resident of Mirankot, a village nearby Amritsar) was horrified at this and expressed, "Why was not Massa Rangar despatched there and then? Was there no Sikh available?" The reply was, "No, not more sensitive to the sense of honour than those who had fled for their lives and were taking shelter in distant places like Jaipur." Bhai Mehtab Singh was cut to the quick and forthwith resolved to visit Amritsar and make an example of the miscreant, Massa. He ordered his steed to be brought to him and rode at a gallop, taking with him Sardar Sukha Singh of Kambho Mari. In August 1740 they reached Amritsar and disguised themselves as Mohammedans and filling two bags with well rounded bricks, demanded admission. The sentinels on being informed, that the men were officials and had brought money for their master, allowed them to pass on. They were escorted to the presence of Massa who was seated on a cot in Hari Mandir, listening to the music of a dancing girl. They placed their bags before Massa and when he bowed to receive the money, his head was chopped off. The dancing girl fell into swoon and the companions of the accursed libertine ran out terror-

stricken. Their work done, the brave Mehtab Singh and his companion, Sukha Singh, rode back brandishing their swords.

Measures were immediately taken to get hold of the authors of the tragedy, but no trace of them could be found. Zakariya Khan summoned all the Chaudharies of Amritsar and ordered them to produce Mehtab Singh. Harbhagat Naranjania of Jandiala took upon himself to find him out and as per information supplied by him, a force under Nur Din surrounded the village Miran Kot. Mehtab Singh who had just come to see his son Rai Singh was arrested. The child was seriously wounded and left for dead but he recovered under the motherly care of a Kambho woman and grew up to be the father of famous recorder of Sikh history, Rattan Singh Bhangu, the author of *Prachin Panth Parkash*. The Sardar himself was taken to Lahore and was subjected to unspeakable tortures on the wheel and crushed to death (A.D. 1744).<sup>1</sup> Likewise Sukha Singh who was arrested soon after Sardar Mehtab Singh's gruesome execution, was cruelly put to death.<sup>2</sup>

A resident of village Janbar near Lahore, Sabeg Singh had developed fondness of Sikhism since his childhood. When he crossed adolescent age he took up a clerical job in government office. Since he had a fair knowledge of Persian and Punjabi and had a clout with the Sikhs, he was picked up to negotiate, of course, alongwith others, with the Sikhs to prevail upon them to accept Jagir and a title. He did his job creditably and perhaps out of recognition of his merits, he was assigned the prestigious job of Kotwal of the city of Lahore during which period he raised a number of Gurdwaras and softened the rigours of the government's policy vis-a-vis the Sikhs. Soon he earned the wrath of the Qazis

1. Refer to *Itihasik Lekh* of Karam Singh, edited by Hira Singh Dard, page 89.
2. Sukha Singh was a carpenter. When a boy, he came under Sikh influence and got himself finally baptised with the Khalsa Panth. Lives of men with long hair were, in those days in great jeopardy. The parents of Sukha Singh fell alarmed and cut off his hair, when he lay asleep. When he awoke and saw the outrage done him, he, out of anguish, jumped into a well to put an end to his life. But some passerby forcibly brought him out, rebuking him for the attempted suicide. But thereafter Sukha Singh left his house and took up the service of Panth. He was loved and respected by the whole Panth. Like king Arther's knights whenever there was a danger to face or some distinguished act of bravery to be done, Sukha Singh's name was the first that suggested itself to everyone.

who had rabid hate for the Sikhs. They started poisoning the mind of Zakariya Khan against Sabeg Singh labelling him a supporter of the rebels.

Just about this time Sabeg Singh's very cute and intelligent son Shahbaz Singh had a brush with his Muhammedan teacher at Maktab (village school run by a Muslim) over the derogatory remarks about Sikhism. This too was reported to the government. In view of all this the Qazi lost no time to pronounce the judgement that Sahbaz Singh should either embrace Islam or death for blaspheming Islam.

Poignantly upset, the father Subeg Singh approached Zakariya Khan to get the judgement reversed but he met with only a rebuff. He then tried to mollify the Qazi who instead of reconsidering his judgement entangled him also and with utmost impunity characteristic of a fanatical mind, sentenced him too, either to accept Islam or accept to death.

Aghast but firm in their faith both the father and son declared their resolve to court death than to abjure their faith. They were put bare-bodied on the sharp blades of two wheels fitted in such a way that when they were moved they rubbed each other enabling the blades to mince the bodies. According to Dr. Hari Ram Gupta, they were hung up by the legs and flogged on bare-buttocks. Their flesh was pinched with red hot pincers. Both gave up the ghost uttering Akal, Satnam Satnam, two different names of God.

Bota Singh's example is also symptomatic of the courage and the determination of the Sikhs for achieving their goal. Bota Singh Sandha of Bharana with Garja Singh Ranghreta would come occasionally to Amritsar to have a dip in the tank at night and spend the day in some hide-out near Tam Taran. On one occasion, a party of Zamindars met him by chance and was surprised to see that a Khalsa should have been allowed to wander about freely in that manner. One of the party remarked that he must be Beirupia<sup>1</sup> otherwise a Sikh could not be so coward as to move like this. Bota Singh was cut to the quick and resolved to make himself known. He took up his position on the Grand Trunk Road near Sarai Nur-ud-Din and began to collect as toll of one anna per cart and one pie per donkeyload. People paid the tax without

1. A person who disguises himself so perfectly that it becomes difficult for the people to identify him. People used to give doles to such a person as a mark of their appreciation for the performance.

any demur, and no one reported the matter to the Subedar of Lahore. Bota Singh himself then wrote to the Governor<sup>1</sup> that he was collecting the tax from the people thereby defying the Government with impunity; Zakariya Khan sent a detachment of 1000 soldiers under Jalal Khan to arrest and kill Bota Singh. Bota Singh and his lone companion took their position in the dilapidated Sarai, and pierced quite a large number of the military detachment with their missiles which they slung from behind the parapet. At last the place was taken by assault and both the valiant Sikhs were killed in action. The Mughal army, considerably reduced in number, returned to the capital beating drums of victory, but the facts, however, could not be concealed that only two men had necessitated such a large military operation. The way in which the two martyrs had fought and met death elicited admiration and conviction grew upon the minds of the populace that the Sikh movement had the capacity to survive against even the heaviest odds.

In addition to the desperate and strong people being put to death the gentle and harmless Sikhs also suffered death. There was one Bhai Taru Singh, who lived in Poola, a village in Majha tract. He was engaged in the peaceful occupation of agriculture, the proceeds of which he joyously shared with all who called at his house and sought shelter under his roof for a night's repose. Even the Khalsa who was under ban could have food from his kitchen. For some time, he was left unmolested, but then he incurred the enmity of one Bhagat Niranjani, a Khatri of his village. This man preferred a complaint against him to the authorities at Lahore to the effect that Taru Singh was harbouring the Khalsa and dacoits. Zakariya Khan ordered forthwith to capture Bhai Taru Singh. Accordingly, Bhai Taru Singh was captured and brought to Lahore in June 1745, where he plainly admitted of what he had been doing. He was considered to be guilty of treason and ordered his hair to be scrapped off his scalp. Taru Singh stood the ordeal bravely, reciting the words of 'Japji' and calling on the names of God. After a few days torture he surrendered his soul on the 1st of July 1745. The same day Zakariya Khan died on account of the attack of the disease that had stopped his urine. Taru Singh's dead

1. ਚਿਠੀ ਲਿਖੀ ਸਿੰਘ ਬੋਤਾ ਹਥ.....

Chithi likhi Singh Bota, hath hei sota, vich rah khalota; Ana laya Gadhe Nu, Paisa laya Khota; Akho Bhabi Khano Nu, yon akhe Singh Bota.



body was cremated in Shahid Ganj outside Delhi gate of Lahore.<sup>1</sup>

All accounts agree that in spite of his spending millions of rupees and sacrificing some of his best officers, Zakariya Khan failed to annihilate the Sikhs whom every fresh difficulty made more determined and better organised. The sustained persecution of the Sikhs focussed the attention of the people in general on their ideology with the result that many of them turned sympathisers of their cause and quite a big segment of them joined the Khalsa. The impact of the Sikh movement on the peasants was at once deep and wide-spread because they found in it their deliverance from the feudal vexation and political servitude of the Mughal rule. In fact Banda's rule although short lived had heralded a new era—the era of peasant proprietorship, egalitarianism and individual liberty and with the execution of Banda at Delhi the thought currents caused by Banda's rule did not stop rather these continued to operate on the minds of the people. The structural changes in the proprietorship of land in the Punjab were wrought upon by Banda ever lingered in their memory and they naturally wished well of the Sikh movement. This was the reason that the peasants even amidst the most terrible peril gave shelter and provided food to the Khalsa. The Muslim peasantry's case was different. They were not yet prepared to help the Khalsa because they could not free themselves from the stranglehold of Islamic communalism although economically they were as exploited as non-Muslim peasants.

### **Rationale of the Policy of the Persecution of the Sikhs—**

#### **Official View-point**

Zakariya Khan followed the policy of repression towards the Sikhs. In fact he had seen the Sikhs from too close a quarter and regarded them not merely simple marauders or outlaws rather the people surcharged with definite ideology aiming at restructuring society on a new basis and establishing political rule to advance their cause. This view of Zakariya Khan was not a figment of imagination or an excuse to persecute the Sikhs but a fact supported by contemporary history. The Sikhs led by Bhai Mani Singh and Dewan Darbara Singh were conscious of their aspirations. Bhai Mani Singh was a brave soldier and had taken part in the battles of Bhangani, Nandaun and Anandpur, besides

1. Khushwaqt Rai, *Kitab-i-Tarikh-i-Punjab*, page 72; Rattan Singh, *Prachin Panth Parkash*, pp. 285-94.

several minor skirmishes. From his experience arose his attitude and philosophy of resistance. In his exposition of the philosophy, he laid the foundation of the Sikh political power. He told his companions-in-arms that the unjust rule of the Mughal was doomed to a quick end. For the attainment of sovereignty and the establishment of a just rule, the Khalsa must seriously take to Danga a sort of *guerrilla* warfare as the most effective weapon of resistance suited to a numerically inferior people.<sup>1</sup> The objective of the Khalsa was the attainment of their sovereign states. In 1733 when Zakariya Khan made an offer of Jagir to the Sikhs, the views of the Khalsa became poignantly manifest. In the debate that ensued over the acceptance or non-acceptance of the Jagir significantly one argument that was put forth against the offer was that the Khalsa being sovereign by the grace of their Guru and God could not accept such an offer from a power they did not recognise. Furthermore, we come across copious references in the writings of Sikh writers of the 18th century which testify that the Khalsa was bent upon paralysing the machinery of the government, and in this they were prompted by their conviction that their ideas could ill-fit the conceptual as well as the functional frameworks of the Mughal.<sup>2</sup> *Prem Sumarg* which is a book written probably in the later part of the eighteenth century also alludes that the Khalsa had definite objective of establishing their sovereignty and refashioning the society. As Khushwaqt Rai says that when a party of court actors depicted the life of the Sikhs in front of Zakariya Khan, he exclaimed, "O God, to eat grass and to claim king-ship!"<sup>3</sup> Under the circumstances, Zakariya Khan could not help considering the Khalsa as the potential enemy of the Mughal rule.

In this context almost all the Sikh writers aver that Zakariya Khan's adoption of the policy of persecution vis-a-vis the Sikhs was motivated by his conviction that no other religion except Islam should flourish and the long drawn-out struggle between the Sikhs and the government was a part of the struggle between Islam and Sikhism.

To view the policy of Zakariya Khan like this is not only

- 
1. Gurtej Singh, *Mani Singh in Historical Perspective*.
  2. Gyan Singh, *Panth Parkash*, p. 506.  
Rattan Singh Bhangu, *Prachin Panth Parkash*, p. 203.
  3. Khushwaqt Rai, as quoted by Hari Ram Gupta in his book *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol. I, p. 12.

historically incorrect but also an attempt to obscure many cardinal issues involved in Sikh religion and its social and political projection. Zakariya Khan was certainly not a religious fanatic; he did not destroy temples nor did he put restriction of any kind on the mode of worship of any religious group in the province. On the other hand, his relations with the Hindus were cordial and he did not hesitate from appointing Lakhpat Rai and other Hindus of merit against high posts in the Government. There is no doubt that he did not tolerate the Khalsa, but the reasons were not religious. If the religion is taken as dynamic spirito-social principle surely the Sikh religion was this type. It advocated an egalitarian society rooted in the dignity of labour and divinity of man, it did not recognise Jagirdari system and its social economic programmes. The study of Rehatnamas clearly shows that the Sikh religion was a movement which aimed at the transformation of all the aspects of life—social, religious, economic and political. Its political stance was also clear—namely independent rule of the Khalsa. Closely connected with it is another point: Were the Sikhs conscious of what the Sikh Movement stood for? Obviously all the Sikhs could not be conscious but by and large they were conscious of their stand as also of the strategy they framed to translate their aspirations into reality.

Observed in this context, the rationale of the policy of Zakariya Khan is obvious, he followed the repressive policy towards the Sikhs because he was the champion of the old order which protected the interest of the ruling class and also of the community to which this class belonged.

## Chapter 4

# YAHIIYA KHAN AND SHAH NAWAZ KHAN AND SIKH MOVEMENT

On the 1st of July 1745, Zakariya Khan died. He left behind his three sons—Yahiya Khan (sumamed Az-ud-Daula II), Hayatullah Khan (surnamed Hizbar Jang II and Shah Nawaz Khan) and Mir Baqi. Yahiya Khan was a weak and effeminate youth while Shah Nawaz Khan, a favourite of Nadir Shah was aggressive and of grasping character. So far as Mir Baqi was concerned, he was disinterested in the political affairs and was, therefore, unknown to History. At the time of the death of Zakariya Khan, Yahiya Khan and Shah Nawaz were at Delhi and within a week left for the Punjab. Soon, Shah Nawaz Khan demanded partition of their patrimony. A settlement was delayed and the armed retainers of the two sides came to blows with each other. At last, terms were settled and Shah Nawaz Khan, on receiving a certain amount in cash and jewels, withdrew to his faujdari in the Jullundur Doab.

But this did not end the trouble. The Mughal Emperor Mohammad Shah foolishly put off the appointment of the Governor of the province. He rejected the suggestion of Wazir-ul-Mumalik, Qamar-ud-Din Khan, who was the father-in-law of Yahiya Khan for giving Zakariya's two provinces of Lahore and Multan to his two sons as that was likely to create hereditary Turani dominion. The Wazir, who did not want to lose hold on the frontier province which had also become a home of the Mughals like Balkh and Bukhara under the patronage of the last two viceroys, succeeded in persuading the Emperor to grant him Subedari of both these provinces. The Wazir appointed Mumin Khan who had been Zakariya's man of business as his deputy. The Wazir himself could not pay even a single visit to the province.

No more unwise arrangement than an absentee and vicarious governorship could have been devised for the most important frontier. As a consequence of it, "peace and prosperity which the Government of Zakariya Khan had given to the Punjab, were

destroyed. Disorder broke out everywhere. Lawless men, plunderers and adventurers, who had so long kept themselves in hiding now came out of their holes and began to desolate the realm. On one side Raja of Jammu and on the other the Sikhs began to cause tumult and trouble.<sup>1</sup> Mir Mumin had neither the means nor the temperament to suppress these disorders. At last, after persistent persuasion, the Emperor in A.D. 1746 agreed to appoint Yahiya Khan to the governorship of Lahore and Shah Nawaz Khan to that of Multan, while the Wazir continued to be the titular Subedar of both these provinces. The robes of honour for the purpose were granted by the Emperor on August 26, 1746.

Yahiya Khan retained Mir Mumin as his chief officer but his own character did not allow him to function vigorously. To add to his difficulties, Shah Nawaz Khan came to Lahore on the 21st November, 1746 and called upon his brother through Diwan Surat Singh to make a formal division of their father's property. Adina Beg Khan, Kaura Mal and Hashmatullah Khan also joined him.

The discussions that followed resulted in the exchange of hot words with hands flying to the hilts of the swords. The soldiers of the two brothers often fought in the streets of Lahore, while each of the brothers stood behind his entrenchment in his own quarter of the city. The civil war continued for four months. At last, Shah Nawaz's patience wore out, his soldiers clamoured for the arrear of their salary. So on the 17th March, 1747, at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, he ordered his lieutenant Adina Beg Khan to reconnoiter his brother's trenches. This move drew Mumin Khan out in force, but after an indecisive skirmish, each side retired to its shelter. Next day, Shah Nawaz Khan in person delivered a sudden assault and the portable artillery which he covered in front quickly scattered his enemies. Mumin Khan was captured and wounded. Lahore could not hold out against the victor who entered the city on the 21st March 1747. The ex-governor fell into the hands of the usurper and was interned in the Haveli (a fortress like building) of his aunt Dardana Begam, the sister of Zakariya Khan.

Shah Nawaz Khan established himself securely in the office of the Punjab Governor by removing from their posts all the old captains who had grown grey-haired in the service of the father and grand-father, and confiscated their houses and property. He nominated Kaura Mal as his Diwan in place of Lakhpat Rai and

1. J.N. Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Vol. I, page 193.

the vigorous Governor of Adina Beg Khan in the civil and military charge of Jullundur Doab. According to the author of *Tarika-i-Muhammad Shahi* "he was even more cruel than Nadir Shah". His administration was regular in excessive tyranny and oppression. He would inflict severe and inhuman punishments for trivial faults. The amputation of limbs and putting out of eyes was not uncommon. He took little interest in the welfare of the peasantry rather through his extortions to fill his coffers, he drove a good many peasants from peaceful pursuits to lawless habits.<sup>1</sup>

The internment of Yahiya Khan with the Prime Minister of the empire as his father-in-law, added to the anxieties of Shah Nawaz Khan and made him apprehensive of his own future. As a usurper he was aware that he was not liked by Wazir Qamur-ud-Din, the real official Governor of the provinces of Lahore and Multan. If for five months no action had been taken against him by the Emperor or Qamur-ud-Din, that was because of the irresolution of the former, and the apprehension of the latter that his son-in-law might be harmed. Any way, the fear of their wrath falling upon him sooner or later was constantly there. What upset him the most was sudden escape of Yahiya Khan by the end of July 1747. He, therefore, sent his steward, Muhammad Naeem Khan, to the Emperor at Delhi, to apologise for his past sins and mis-conduct and to request that he might be confirmed as the Deputy Governor of Lahore. The envoy arrived at Delhi on September 3, 1747 and opened negotiations first with Diwan Abdul Majid Khan and then through Bakhshi-ul-Mumalik Saadat Khan, with Qamur-ud-Din. Delay in such talks was natural, particularly when Qamur-ud-Din was not well-disposed towards him.

Shah Nawaz now felt sure that the retribution of the Emperor and the Wazir must fall on him. Consequently, he looked for help from some foreign quarter. At that time, Ahmad Shah Abdali was in the province of Kabul. Shah Nawaz Khan, well aware of Ahmad's movements, turned towards him, and, with the advice of Adina Beg, the faujdar of his Jagir in the Jullundur Doab and a staunch supporter of his in the usurpation of Lahore, sent to him an envoy, with a letter inviting him to take possession of the country. For himself, he only asked for the post of the prime minister under him. He, as a token of his sincerity, embraced the Shia religion replacing the names of the Tamurid Emperors on his

1. Bakhtmal, *Khalsanama*, p. 10; *Khalsanama* was written in 1812.



official seal by the names of twelve Imams. He thus hoped to find allies among the Shia soldiery of Persia.

The Wakil and the letter of Shah Nawaz Khan thrilled Abdali. He bowed to the Almighty for his mysterious ways of enabling him to consummate his innate desire. He at once got the required deed drawn up with the terms—the crown to Ahmad, the Wazirship to Shah Nawaz, and having got it sealed by the chiefs of his army as witnesses despatched it to Lahore with a confidential representative, Bughra Khan Popalzic.

In the meanwhile, Adina Beg, who was playing a double game informed the Wazir of the secret correspondence transpiring between Shah Nawaz Khan and Ahmad Shah Abdali saying that his nephew had become very head-strong, had entered into correspondence with Ahmad Shah Abdali and paid no attention to the words of his best servants, that if the Wazir were to soothe his mind and gain his heart, they would also be able to beseech him. The Wazir who had been inattentive was awakened to the new dimensions, the situation was being lent. Now there was no alternative left for Delhi Court. A little more delay would drive Shah Nawaz into the arms of the invaders. Therefore, the Delhi Government instead of boldly facing the danger and crushing the rebel at Lahore by a prompt and vigorous attack found wisdom in despatching to him the royal rescript confirming him as the Deputy Governor of Lahore. The Wazir also wrote, in his own hand, a personal conciliatory letter to his nephew. The purport of the letter was "that their family has all along been loyal to the Mughal Emperor and had never guilty of any act of ingratitude or treason, it was a sorrowful thing that he should have had such intentions, and a matter of shame for him to have stooped to obey an Afghan Yasowal (personal attendant) of Nadir Shah. He should drive out this insignificant fellow from all the frontiers of Hindustan, the five provinces of Kabul, Kashmir, Thatta, Lahore and Multan would then come under his own jurisdiction and, in this, the whole Empire with all its resources will be at his back."

The personal letter and the farman from Delhi reversed the whole situation. The young Governor changed his mind and unmindful of the negotiations with Ahmad Shah Abdali decided to throw in his lot with his traditional masters in opposition to Ahmad Shah Abdali.<sup>1</sup>

1. *Siyar-ul-Mutakbirin*, pp. 861-62.

Anandram Makhliis, *Tazkirah-i-Anandram*, p. 236.

## **The Sikh Movement during Yahiya Khan and Shah Nawaz Khan**

The period of Yahiya Khan and Shah Nawaz Khan is of no less significance than that of Zakariya Khan or of his father, Abdus Samad Khan. During the period of Abdus Samad Khan and Zakariya Khan, the Sikhs perfected their conceptual framework. Their ideas about 'Panth' and 'Guru Granth' became clear, explicit and terse. Their social and political goals were defined and strategies to achieve them were carefully laid out. They had set afoot an organisation in the form of Taruna Dal and Buddha Dal and they were fortunate enough to have a capable leader in Nawab Kapur Singh towering all others in genius and in personality and in faith for the mission, absolutely fit for inducting cohesion among the Sikhs. Yet the Khalsa could not afford to be complacent for what they had done or planned, because new factors had appeared in the political horizon of the Punjab.

The most important factor, of course, was the change in the governorship. Momin Khan had succeeded Zakariya Khan as Deputy governor of Qamur-ud-Din in November, 1746. Yahiya Khan was appointed to the post of governorship of Lahore. Both these persons were the chips of the old block. Momin Khan, who was virtually man of business during Zakariya's rule could not shed off his views regarding the Sikhs for which he had been the protagonist only recently. Yahiya Khan also was immobile in his thought and he clung fast to the policy and thought-pattern of his father and the class to which he belonged. Obviously, he could not envision the Sikhs problem like a statesman with open mind and against wide perspective. Naturally, the Sikhs did not hope that the government would relent from the stand they had taken against the Sikhs.

The next factor was the impact of the Sikh movement on the people of the Punjab. No doubt, Zakariya Khan was strong, energetic and intelligent Governor and he gave peace and stable government to the people, yet all was not well with his regime. The government spent a lot in suppressing the Sikh revolts and the revolt of the refractory feudal lords with the result that the government suffered a financial crisis. The change in governorship did not improve the situation as it could not do, because it continued to deploy the soldiers against the Sikhs who were as active and determined as ever. To meet the financial crisis, the

revenue officials resorted to short term but ready method of indulging in heavy exactions from the peasantry. Dr. Hari Ram Gupta very beautifully sums up the condition of the Jat peasantry of the Majha. He says, "they (the Jats of Majha) were ground down between the two mill-stones of oppression. Heavy exactions by the revenue officials and maltreatment by the military contingents roaming about in search of the Sikh brought them nothing but ruin and dishonour."

The quiet and industrious Jats so long as they were left to themselves by the government remained contented with their life as cultivators of the field; but the tyrannous rule of their rulers forced them to think on new lines. Some of them became plunderers and free-booties while others saw their redemption in embracing Sikh faith.<sup>1</sup>

Sikhism whose idea of evolving society on the basis of dignity of labour and sharing of national wealth was sure to stimulate them. Princep comments "the spirit of the revived sect displayed itself at first in secret associations and isolated acts of depredation. Bodies of armed men in tens and twenties called *Dharwee* in the defeat of province, that is, high waymen infested the routes of communication, attacked villages or plundered towns according as their local connections invited to either mode of seeking wealth or the means of support. The early neglect of the ruling authority enabled the associations to prosper, and the most successful chiefs purchased horses with the proceeds of their spoil, and mounted and armed their followers. Their example and success made the cause popular with the young and adventurous so that the number who took to these sources augmented daily until the chiefs formed respective *Deras* or encampments in open defiance of the ruling authority, and sought celebrity of bold and hardy enterprises which gave security in the awe they inspired, while wealth and reputation resulting afforded the means of further strengthening themselves."<sup>2</sup>

People of all ranks and ages flocked in, young lads were attracted to this life of independence either by a noble enthusiasm or by natural restlessness. Thus the sturdy plodding race of hereditary cultivators whose diligence had built up the agricultural

1. It is not difficult to cull information pertaining to this from the *Rahitnamas*, *Prem Sumarg* etc.
2. Princep; *Origin of the Sikh Power in Punjab and Political life of Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, p. 3.

system of the Punjab became as skilful in the use of the sword as they were in the use of the plough. For the Sikh leadership, the mounting discontent among the agricultural classes and the new awareness as a result thereof were to be taken into consideration while framing their strategy to forge ahead with their programme.

Another factor that had persecuted itself was the strife between Yahiya Khan and his brother Shah Nawaz Khan for the governorship of Lahore. This strife besides affording much-needed respite for the Sikhs proved a patent divisive factor under its stress. The bureaucracy of the province suffered bifurcation, one section supporting Yahiya Khan while the other buttressing the cause of Shah Nawaz Khan. The segmentation of the bureaucracy segmented the vested interest of the class they belonged to, thereby causing a great harm to the establishment and its social and political commitments.

The Khalsa leadership being fully alive to the implications of the new factor mentioned above felt the need of setting up an organisation. The peasantry stimulated either by the discontent or by the loftiness of the ideals of the movement was to be utilized properly. There was every likelihood of their turning into armless frustrated free-booters or frustrated escapists. In order to popularise the Sikh faith the needs of the individuals who were daily joining them had to be attended to. Their relations and friends leading peaceful lives had to be protected and those who opposed them had to be silenced. The political divisions at the provincial court and the financial crises that had gripped the government had to be taken advantage of. For all this, a concerted plan of action had to be prepared, weapons and provisions had to be got ready. In a word, organisation was needed.

Sensitive to the call of the time, the Sikhs assembled at Amritsar on the occasion of the first Dewali after the death of Zakariya Khan, which fell on the 14th October 1745. They after Gurmata declared their new organisation. They divided themselves into 25 associations, each consisting of about 100 persons.<sup>1</sup> These associations were united not only by religious ties but also by common interest, and therefore, a system of general confederation for defence as well as for operation came into existence. Any one could become the member of these associations provided he knew

1. This seems to be the first Gurmata regularly passed by the Sikhs after a long period of persecution.

horse-riding and fighting. Possession of a horse and a matchlock was his best recommendation for joining association, though in many cases, they were assured of these things by the leader from his spoil. According to Bute Shah, "Such was the enthusiasm of these new zealots that being impatient of possessing a horse, they did not wait for the expeditions, but stole money from home, brought a horse and joined a Sikh band. The Sikh religion at this time allowed no distinction of rank or position among its adherents. The members of association, whether old or new were meted out equal treatment by the leader as well as the whole body of the Khalsa."<sup>1</sup> The plunder collected during an expedition was divided among the chiefs according to the number of their followers, each of which received an equal share of the booty.<sup>2</sup> The soldiers of these Sikh chiefs were not paid in cash. They received a share of the booty.

The organisation allowed full autonomy to its constituents under their own leaders, ensuring at the same time unity of action, during times of emergency for the Panth. Moreover, the new groups likely to be formed under the men of leading and independent spirit who would not like to swim along with their old groups, were also given ready recognition. In fact this process was encouraged by the Khalsa brotherhood and career was thrown upon to military talent. Consequently, almost every village provided a Sardar who attracted free lancers from the neighbourhood to join him.

This, in turn, served the most useful purpose of providing leaders in abundance. Such leaders were not created by some high authority but came to occupy this position, a matter of course, on account of their natural ability.

Furthermore, the organisation into regular associations may be taken as a significant starting point in the military career of the Sikhs. Hitherto the Sikhs had adopted 'hit and run' method, but now they decided to adopt guerilla warfare which combines in itself advantage of hit and run method and those of organised warfare. This changed the character of Sikh resistance. Not only did it enable them to face their foes and plunder them but also it gave them an idea of organising a multitude of plunderers into some sort of cavalry regiments, destined to play an important role in the history in the times to come.<sup>3</sup>

1. Bute Shah, *Tarikh-i-Punjab*, P.U. Library, MS.

2. Gupta, Hari Ram, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. I, p. 23.

3. Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs*, p. 89.

Greffin, *Rajas of the Punjab*, p. 16.



Under the new impulse caused by their organisation into associations, the Sikhs made up their mind to punish their enemies. The associations started their depredation with impunity. Their early successes stimulated them to undertake bolder adventure. A band of their daring youths disguised themselves as Mughal soldiers, entered Lahore, through the Mochi Gate and started looting it. The shopkeepers were just closing their shops, as the Sikhs descended upon them. Articles worth lakhs of rupees were looted and before the royal army was mobilised, the Sikhs had disappeared, but not before they had despatched to their doom a few Mullahs and Qazis, the enemies of the Panth. The royal army went in pursuit as the Sikhs had, in the meantime, joined the rest of their body lying concealed in the jungle on the banks of the Ravi.<sup>1</sup> It was almost an uphill task for the Mughal troops with their loose trousers to pass through the thorny bushes over a marshy soil where the legs of the horses sank in mud.

### **Chhota Ghalughara—April-June 1746**

Yahiya Khan piqued by all this, ordered Diwan Lakhpat Rai to take immediate stern measures against the Sikhs. The Diwan despatched a strong contingent of cavalry to effect the purpose. The contingent succeeded in expelling the Sikhs from their swampy haunts. One of their bands led by Jassa Singh Ahluwalia set out for the hills to seek safe shelter. In January or February A.D. 1746, the Jatha was forced by Lakhpat's brother Diwan Jaspat Rai the faujdar of Eminabad, to change his route and reached near Eminabad. Jaspat Rai who like his brother was over-enthusiastic to maintain his influence and position with the government by identifying himself whole-heartedly with the policy of the government, took exception to their stationing at Rori, a suburb of Eminabad. According to Ali-ud-Din, it was reported to Jaspat Rai at Khokhran that the Sikhs had driven away a herd of sheep from Gondlanwala, and were eating them near the present site of Gurdwara.<sup>2</sup> Rattan Singh, however, says that the Sikhs had addressed a letter to Jaspat Rai asking permission to purchase provision from his town. The faujdar instead of heeding to their request ordered them to move out immediately. The reply of the

1. Gian Singh, *Shamsber Khalsa*, pp. 661-662.

2. This gurdwara perpetuates the memory of Guru Nanak's visit to Eminabad.



Sikhs was that their soldiers had not eaten anything for the last three days. They would leave immediately the next morning. Jaspat Rai, who was not prepared to show them any leniency sent again the strict orders to disperse at once. But the Sikhs would not move.

Jaspat Rai, chagrined at all this, mounted on an elephant and launched an attack on the Sikhs with all the troops he could manage. The Sikhs who were busy cooking their meals were immediately encircled and were naturally handicapped but even then, they offered a stubborn resistance. During the course of action, Nibahu Singh, a Rangretta Sikh, pounced upon the enemy like a tiger. Getting hold of the beast's tail, he climbed upon the elephant and cut off Jaspat's head with his sword. No sooner did the commander fall, than the heterogeneous rabble and the mercenary soldiery took to their heels. Baba Kirpa Rai, the Guru of Jaspat Rai, had to pay a ransom of five hundred rupees to obtain the head of Jaspat Rai from the Sikhs in order to perform the last rites of the latter.<sup>1</sup> Having killed Jaspat, the Sikhs crashed upon Eminabad, pillaged it thoroughly and disappeared again into the thickets of the Ravi.<sup>2</sup>

Lakhpat Rai flew into wild rage when he heard the news of the death of his brother. He came to the Nawab at Lahore and placing his turban at his feet swore, that he would retie it on his head only when he had destroyed the Sikhs root and branch. "I am Khatri," said he, "as was Guru Gobind Singh, the creator of the Khalsa; but I shall not call myself by that name until I have erased their name from the page of existence." He got a general proclamation issued for the general slaughter of the Khalsa. To begin with, he arrested many Sikhs of Lahore and beheaded them at Shahid Ganj on the 10th of March, 1746, the sacred day of Amavas caring little of the petition submitted by the deputation of persons such as Kaura Mal, Kunjah Mal, Dila Ram, Hari Ram, Kashmiri Mal, Surat Singh, Har Singh, Bhai Des Raj and Chaudhari Jawahar Mal to the effect that the Sikhs should not be executed on the Amavas day at least. Besides this, it was announced with the beat of drum that no one should recite the Sikh scriptures and any one muttering the name of Guru would be arrested and his

---

1. The Samadhi of Jaspat Rai was built by his brother, Lakhpat Rai and is still to be found in Baddo-ki-Gosaian in the district of Gujranwala.

2. Khushwaqt Rai, *Tarikh-i-Sikhan*, p. 47.

Ali-ud-Din, *Ibratnama*, pp. 229-31.

Rattan Singh Bhangu, *Prachin Panth Parkash*, pp. 291-93.

belly ripped open. Nobody was allowed to utter the word 'Granth' and the word 'Pothi' was to be used to signify the book. The use of the word 'Gur' a sweet solid preparation of the juice of sugarcane was to be discarded in favour of 'Rori' or 'Bheli' since the word 'Gur' has some affinity with the word 'Guru' and those who defiled these orders were to be beheaded or converted to Islam.<sup>1</sup> The Sikh scriptures that Lakhpat Rai could lay his hands upon, were either burnt or thrown into river or wells. The tank of the Amritsar was filled up with earth and dirt.

The general body of the Sikhs numbering 15 thousand had taken shelter in the swamps of the upper course of the Ravi. Jathedar Kapur Singh, Sukha Singh Mari Kambo, Gurdial Singh Dallewala, Charat Singh Sukarchakia and Jassa Singh Ahluwalia were their leaders. Yahiya Khan and Lakhpat Rai personally marched in their pursuit and the Sikhs were driven up to the right bank of the Ravi into the north east corner of the province. The Sikhs measured their swords with the Mughal soldiers in several skirmishes but they were always worsted because of their helplessness against the light artillery. At long last, they sought shelter in the reedy marshes of Kahnuwan where there was a thick forest abounding in wild animals. Being extremely hardpressed, the Sikhs one night decided to give their enemies the slip under the cover of darkness. A few of them who were ready to lay down their lives for their brethren raised loud shouts of 'Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Wahguru Ji Ki Fateh' and fearlessly dashed into their foes. This attracted the whole force of Lakhpat Rai to that particular spot and the other Sikhs succeeded in escaping towards Parol Kathua.<sup>2</sup> Lakhpat Rai soon overtook them and they had to take shelter on the spurs of Basholi hills where the river swept through a deep bed between high banks. At this place the Sikhs expected the Hindu population to afford them refuge but soon they were disillusioned, as the Hill-men under the order of the government blocked all ingress into their territory. The situation was awfully desperate. The Sikhs had a steep mountain in front, a flooded river on the right and a determined enemy behind, they had no ammunition, no food and no ally. Their horses, being half-fed, were tumbling into the mountain clefts. Lakhpat's men fell upon the Sikhs like enraged tigers. At this critical juncture, the Sikhs wanted to escape by crossing the river but they were prevented

1. Bhangu, Rattan Singh, *Prachin Panth Parkash*, p. 294.

2. Between Pathankot and Dalhousie on the Ravi.

from doing so by the strong dreadful current of river. Two of the young Dallewalia Sardars jumped into the river to ascertain if it could be feasible to cross but as none of them could be seen again, the Sikhs gave up their resolve of crossing the river. Soon after they planned that those who were on foot should try their luck with mountaineers, and others who had horses under them should pierce through the enemy to some safe resort. Those who went to the mountains were able to spend about six months in different parts of Mandi and Kullu, where they had to undergo great hardships after which they rejoined Khalsa at Kiratpur. The main body of the Sikhs under Sukha Singh Mari Kambo made a desperate assault on the Mughal forces and after a vigorous fight and undergoing an immense loss of life and animals was successful in reaching the eastern bank of the river Ravi. Here too the Khalsa could not enjoy peace. The Lakhpat's men were soon on them. They hurriedly crossed the vast stretch of sandy miles and reached the Beas which they crossed through the ferry of Shri Hargobindpur. On reaching the opposite bank, they came upon a deep bed of sand three km. long. Already exhausted by hunger, thirst and the pain of their wounds, their agony deepened and intensified, now by the burning sand. They tore out their turbans, tied the pieces to their feet and thus managed to cross it.

Then they entered the Jullundur Doab and halted near a village. They immediately addressed themselves to the cooking of food, when the local population and a party of Mughals led by Adina Beg, fell upon them. Just at this time, the news reached that Lakhpat had crossed the Beas and was fast advancing towards the Sikhs. The Sikhs were of the view that this place would be inaccessible for the heavy clothed troopers and their artillery but the impetuous enemy was determined and a way was cut through for the movement of the army.

Being extremely hard-pressed by the hot pursuits on all sides, the Sikhs were thus tight cornered. They gave up cooking and fell upon Adina's troops and piercing through them reached the Sulej. They crossed at Alliwai and arrived in Malwa with great difficulty while Lakhpat Rai returned to Lahore.

The Malwa Sikhs sympathised with them and offered them their homes to take rest and re-marshall. The leaders with their surviving associates halted at different places. Sukha Singh stayed at Jaito, Jassa Singh at Kot Kapura, Kapur Singh at Dhing Wanjhuke, Hari Singh at Dyalpur, Charat Singh at Pucca Pathral

while Deep Singh with his devoted band retired to the Lakhi Jungle. Many other Sikhs stayed at Tihara and in neighbourhood of Daroli.<sup>1</sup>

The loss of the Khalsa was tremendous and they rightly called this event as Ghallu Ghara, a holocaust. Of about 22 thousand Sikhs who took part in this action, only about ten thousand escaped to the hospitable Malwa to the south-west of the Sutlej. About three thousand Sikhs were taken prisoners. They were brought to Lahore dressed clown-like and were made to mount on camels to be finally beheaded at the Shaheed Ganj. In the pages of the History of the Punjab the event is termed as small holocaust to be distinguished from a big holocaust of 1762. Such strong measures checked the progress of Sikh religion for the time being. The enthusiasm for the Guru deminished considerably and a large number of people who had joined their ranks more for the sake of plunder and love of dare-devily than for the devotion to the Khalsa faith now began to desert the Khalsa Panth. Lakhpat Rai had the satisfaction of wreaking a thorough vengeance for his brother's death.<sup>2</sup>

The sufferings of the Khalsa were not, however, to continue very long. After about five months (21st November 1746) Yahiya's younger brother Shah Nawaz Khan insurrected against him. The fratricidal war between the two brothers continued till Shah Nawaz Khan succeeded in usurping the governorship of Punjab and taking Yahiya Khan as his captive. The period of the struggle (November 1746 to March 1747) gave the Sikhs, a breathing spell which they so badly needed. The Sikhs recouped their strength. They left their retreats and hide-outs and started paying visits to Amritsar as a mark of their renewed activities. The government no doubt acted promptly to nip them. The Muslim officials of the district of Amritsar were alerted regarding the moves of the Sikhs of Amritsar, erected four towers at the four corners of the tank with a view to keeping a sharp watch on the Sikhs coming there to bathe. Yet the Sikhs could not be overpowered because they were aware of the preoccupation of Yahiya Khan in the Civil war and his inability to deploy forces against them. Sukha Singh a prominent Sikh leader undaunted by the Government resolved to

1. Bhangu, Rattan Singh, *Prachin Panth Parkash*, pp. 389-90, Wazir Hind Press, printed in 1914.

2. According to Rattan Singh, the number of killed was 40000 and according to Gian Singh, the number was 7000.

have a dip in the tank called Amritsar in broad day-light. He dressed himself in Turkish uniform, bathed in the tank at mid-day and fled away disclosing his identity by taking off his turban. His example was followed by other Sikhs of daring spirit who began to pour in the holy city on groups of tens and twenties. The Mughal faujdar was unnerved by the open defiance of the Sikhs and had to retire to Lahore, thereby redoubling the enthusiasm of the Sikhs to flock to the ranks of the Khalsa for the sake of consummating their historic mission.

"The different bands of the Sikhs then sallied out of Amritsar and fell upon the Bari and Rachna Doab like birds of prey. They let loose their vengeance to have its full play on the government officials, especially those who had persecuted them. They soon succeeded in acquiring an immense booty, thus replenishing their exhausted stores and fully equipped themselves with arms, ammunition, horses and other necessaries."<sup>1</sup>

### **Shah Nawaz and the Sikhs**

In March, 1747, when after ousting Yahiya Khan, Shah Nawaz Khan occupied the province, he did not bring about any change in his policy towards the Sikhs and according to Hakikat, "he turned his attention towards uprooting the Sikhs. When a Sikh was brought before him, his belly was cut in his presence and sometimes his brain was taken out by driving a nail into his head. If any Sikh was brought prisoner at that time when he was engaged in eating, he asked that his bladder be extracted and brought and according to his order the executioner took it out and put it on his tray and he went on eating his food with pleasure."<sup>2</sup>

But very shortly the obtaining circumstances forced him to follow his policy with much reduced vigour. Various factors compelled him to do so. In the first instance, his position as a governor of the province was not secure because Qamur-ud-Din the Wazir was engaged in sustained endeavour to secure Subedari of Lahore for his son-in-law Yahiya Khan, and this being so, he could not pursue his policy towards the Sikhs with unabated vigour. Secondly, the meteoric rise of Ahmad Shah Durrani in the country adjoining India had shaken him to new political realities or abetted him to indulge in diplomatic negotiations with Ahmad

---

1. Bhangu, Rattan Singh, *Prachin Panth Parkash*, pp. 313-14.

2. *Haqiqat-i-Bina-Urja-i-Firqa-i-Sikhan*.



Shah to countervail the moves of the Delhi Court to secure Subedari of the province for himself. Consequently, he did not think it politic to waste his time in persecuting the Sikhs with vigour while bigger tasks were there to accomplish. Thirdly, Diwan Kaura Mal and Adina Beg also influenced Shah Nawaz Khan to relax his policy of persecuting. Diwan Kaura Mal, being a 'Khulasa Sikh' had soft corner for the Sikhs while Adina Beg had inclinations towards the Sikhs out of policy.

The Sikhs on their part took full advantage of the respite which the Government was constrained to offer. They met at Amritsar on the Baisakhi day (30th March, 1747). On this day, a Gurmata was passed to the effect that a fort should be erected at Amritsar. Soon after, the work of the construction of the fort was started in right earnest; the Sikhs themselves worked as masons, carpenters and labourers. The site for the fort was selected near Ramsar, another holy tank two Km. distant from Hari Mandir. Six feet wide foundation was dug. All the four walls of the fort were started simultaneously. Special provision was made for the gates and towers. A deep and wide ditch was excavated around the fort. The fort was named 'Ram Rauni' (God's Shelter). It was a small, mud-built fort with an accommodation for 500 men. After the completion of the fort the Sikhs addressed themselves to the task of beautifying the temple and the tank.<sup>1</sup> Hari Singh Bhangi established his residential quarter in the vicinity of Hari Mandir.

The construction of the fort at Amritsar, especially when this city being situated on the Grand Trunk Road and in the neighbourhood of the provincial capital of the Mughals, was not

---

1. Bhangu, Rattan Singh, *Prachin Panth Parkash*, pp. 339-40.

The Singhs laid the foundation of the boundary wall of their fort, near the spot where the Guru had got a well sunk. The Singhs were themselves masons and labourers. They were men of brave spirit and generous impulse. They ground the flour and prepared their food themselves.

And this was the secret of their glory and leadership. Any Singh who had surpassed others in this common cause, earned the collective admiration of the other Singhs. There was no mutual jealousy and no one poured out his personal sufferings. They built the wall at great speed.

Like the monkeys building the bridge at the ocean couplet.

They started work in all the four sides simultaneously without being tired. Greatly they worked in accordance with the cooperative commitment.



safe, has baffled many historians and scholars. But a closer view of historical development that had taken so far would make the things altogether clear and lucid. There were several factors in favour of such a choice. Upto this juncture, awareness had dawned upon the Sikhs that Amritsar was a theo-political centre for them. This being so, it was but natural for them that they would have selected Amritsar as the site of their fort. Secondly, the military needs also led them to take this decision. This city being the heart of the Majha tract, their real home, surrounded on all sides by a thick forest of Palas trees could afford them a safe retreat in times of emergency. Besides, they could closely watch the policy of the Lahore government and the movements of its forces.

The Sikhs, during the period under study did not take any offensive against the Government and followed the policy of masterly inactivity. Some scholars have attributed their quietude to their good relations with Diwan Kaura Mal. Dr. Hari Ram Gupta remarks, "out of the regards for their patron who occupied the highest authority next to the viceroy in the Punjab, the Sikhs decided to bring their plundering activities to a stand-still, more so because they really needed a breathing time and leisure to recoup." We do not fully agree with the learned scholar. We are of the opinion that the Sikhs were not politically naive and mere love or respect for a certain sympathiser of their cause could prevail upon them to stop their activities. In fact the Sikh leadership at this time was very shrewd, dynamic, wise, perceptive and determined. They had the capacity for understanding the impact of political currents and cross-current and had the capacity to frame their policy accordingly. They very wisely kept restraint because they wanted Shah Nawaz Khan to concentrate his attention on fratricidal war which was sure to weaken the Mughal Government. They were also aware of the activities and ambition of Ahmad Shah Abdali, particularly those which had bearing on the political affairs of the Punjab. They could foresee that invasion of the Ahmad Shah Abdali on India, whether Shah Nawaz Khan welcomes him or not, is sure to give a rude jerk to the Government as also to the economy of the province. This state of affairs was bound to yield profit to the Sikhs. It was also thought that the invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali would start an era of Afghan-Mughal struggle for the supremacy in the frontier province in which case the benefit was sure to accrue to the Sikhs because both the powers engaged in a life and death struggle would have less time and less energy

to reckon with the Sikhs. Hence the Sikhs' quietude or policy of inactivity was an act of political wisdom warranted by the contemporary circumstances and political imperatives; it was certainly not a whim born of friendship or respect for any individual, however great he might be.

### **Abdali's First Invasion**

Nadir Shah was murdered near Kuchen at the extreme north eastern corner of Khurasan, on the 9th June, 1747 and left the field open for Ahmad Shah Abdali. The ancestors of Ahmad Shah Abdali had their homes in the Herat district and belonged to the Saddu-Zai clan of Afghans. His father and grandfather having been slain in the battle, young Ahmad fled for refuge to the Ghilzai Clan in Qandhar. When Nadir Shah captured Qandhar in 1737, he took Ahmad into his service as a personal attendant (Yasowal). The conqueror removed the Ghilzai Clan from their home in Qandhar to Mazandran and Khurasan, while he shifted the Abdali Clan wholesale from Hirat and Khurasan to the Qandhar district which henceforth became the land of the Abdalis. In the service of Nadir Shah, Ahmad Shah Abdali greatly distinguished himself and rose to the Chief Commander of the King's Abdali contingent. Nadir Shah was convinced of Ahmad's ability and used to say, "I have not found in Iran, Turan or Hind any man equal to Ahmad Shah Abdali in capacity and character."

After murdering Nadir at midnight, the Qizalbash conspirators planned to keep the fact a secret from the rest of the army till next morning, in order to attack his favoured Afghan troops by surprise and plunder their camp and then seize all the property of the late king without a sharer. But so great a secret was too hard to be kept and the news leaked out. Ahmad Shah Abdali heard of it before morning, kept vigil of his camp throughout the dark night and early next morning marched in battle array to the tent of the deceased Nadir Shah. The Qizalbash soldiers and camp followers were engaged in indiscriminate plunder. The Uzbek and Afghan contingents at once plunged into the game and "in four hours from the dawn, no trace remained on the ground of the tents and prosperity of Nadir Shah. Everything had been dispersed and had disappeared."

After that the Afghan contingents marched away rapidly from Kuchen in a compact body for self-defence against any Qizalbash attack and took to Qandhar. At the end of the third day, they halted

and held a Jargah, a council of the tribal chiefs to decide the question of leadership. According to Ibn Muhammad Amin Abdul-Kasan Gulistani, they agreed "in this long journey we must have some one under whose orders should conduct ourselves. Without a supreme chief, it is very difficult, nay impossible to reach Qandhar with the entire body of our troops, followers and dependents in the face of danger from the Qizilbashes. Let us, therefore, make an effort to appoint chief to face whatever may happen before we get our destination." The proposition did not admit of any easy solution. Each tribe was anxious to advance the claims of its own candidate. At the ninth sitting, Haji Jamal Khan, the chief of Muhammad-Zeis, united a majority of suffrages, but the minority was strong and the decision seemed remote. When the disputant chiefs seemed wearied with heated and interminable discussions, a Darvesh Mohammed Sabir Khan by name, put forward the claim of Ahmad Shah saying "why all this verbose talk? God has created Ahmad Khan a much greater than any of you, he is the most noble of all the Afghan families. Maintain, therefore, God's work for His Wrath will weigh heavily upon you, if you destroy it." All the Sardars including Haji Jamal Khan Muhammad Zei, the most powerful and the most influential of all of them at once realized the superiority of the Saddo-Zei's claim. Ahmad Khan was descendant in a direct line from Saddo who had been an ambassador to Shah Abbas the Great, whereas Haji Jamal Khan's ancestor Muhammad, was only a companion of his in that embassy. Thus his second ancestor Khwaja Khizan was the national saint of the Afghan tribes. Last, though not least was the eminence to which his forefathers had risen as chiefs of Abdalis. The superior claims of Ahmad Khan thus established. Haji Jamal Khan Muhammad Zei immediately withdrew his claim and supported the election of Ahmad Khan with his unequalled persuasive eloquence. Even after assuming chiefship, Ahmad Khan did not declare himself to be the king (perhaps for want of requisite material for royal grandeur). But Darvesh Sabir Shah who had a lot of influence on Ahmad Khan was not the man to be easily put off. When he saw that the choice in favour of Ahmad Khan had appealed to the Afghan Chiefs and tribesmen, he availed himself of the psychological moment and piling up a small mound of earth, he seized Ahmad's hand and seated him thereon saying, "This is your kingdom." Then strewing some barley shoots on his head, he declared them the aigrette on his crown styled him Durri-

Dauran (King, the pearl of the age). But Ahmad amended the title and was content to style himself as Durri-Dauran, the pearl of pearls and his tribe of the Abdalis as the Durrani (of the pearls).

Another matter of importance decided in the meeting of the Afghan chiefs referred to above, was to sever all connections with Persia and to declare the independence of the Afghans under a king of their own. A full-fledged king, though not yet formally crowned, Ahmad Khan proceeded to make the necessary appointments. Shah Wali Khan Bamezei was appointed Prime Minister under the title of Ashkaf-ul-Wazra. Sardar Jan Khan, popularly known as Jahan Khan was appointed war minister and Sipah Salar or the commander-in-chief. Shah Pasand Khan was created Amir-i-Lashkar or chief of the army. Similarly, many other Sardars such as Abdullah Khan, Barkhurdar Khan were honoured and appointed to the high posts.

He then arrived at Qandhar and immediately sent out Jarchis or public criers, to announce the news of Nadir's death and to proclaim his own election to the independent kingship of the Afghans. The Ghilzai Afghan whom Nadir had left as his governor in this fort plotted to kill Ahmad by treachery, but the blow was anticipated. Abdali killed the leading conspirators and took possession of Qandhar where he crowned himself with full pomp and struck coin in his own name (July 1747). The coin bore the following inscription :

Hukam Shud Az Kadar Bechun Be Ahmad Badshah Sikka  
Zan Barseim Wo Zar Az Oj Mahi Tabmah.

[Command came from God, the inscrutable, to Ahmad the king, strike coin on silver and gold from the bottom of the seat to the moon.]

The official seal for his farmans was inscribed with the words :

Ahukam Lilla Ya Fatah Ahmad Shah Durri Durran.  
[By the command of God, the Bestower of victory, Ahmad Shah the Pearl of Pearls.]

At the end, the picture of a peacock was carved on it. The shape of his seal ring was that of goblet.<sup>1</sup>

Ahmad Khan then assumed the title of Shah in addition to that of Durri-Dauran, and he was thenceforward to be known as Ahmad Shah Durrani.

1. Dr. Ganda Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, p. 32.

Almost simultaneous to the performance of the formal ceremony to assume kingship, Ahmad Shah seized at Qandhar, Taqi Khan Sherazi, Beglar Begi to Nadir Shah in Sindh and the Punjab and Mohammad Saeed, a representative of Nawab Zakariya Khan of Lahore and Nawab Nasir Khan of Kabul, with a treasure of two crores of rupees which they were carrying to Persia to Nadir Shah. The money thus gained was utilized to win over the general support of the officers, the men of the army and those chiefs who were still indecisive in extending their whole-hearted support to Ahmad Shah as also to raise a large army without which his future plans were sure to fail. Ahmad Shah treated Mohammad Taqi Khan and Nadir Khan with respect and kindness. Mohammad Taqi Khan was so much overwhelmed by Ahmad's affection that he entered his service with a large number of his Qizalbash followers and as desired by his new master, recalled a large number of Nadir's other Qizalbash servants, stationed at Kabul and the Punjab and persuaded them to enter the Afghan service.

After arranging for the administration of Qandhar and taking oaths of allegiance from the Abdali tribesmen, Ahmad set out to conquer the province of Afghanistan from Nadir's officers.

He first took possession of Ghazni after some fighting and installed his own governor there.

Next he turned his attention to Kabul. To the governorship of Kabul, Ahmad had confirmed Nasir Khan who originally ruled Kabul on behalf of Mohammad Shah, but when that province was transferred to Nadir, he was allowed to continue in its government. Ahmad Shah also wanted that he should work as governor of the province on his behalf. Nasir Khan who was a captive of Ahmad Shah agreed to do so and he was set at liberty to join his post on the condition that he would pay Rs. 5 lakhs to his master. To ensure his good behaviour Ahmad Shah kept his elder son as a hostage. But soon after his return to Kabul, he left for Peshawar and according to one tradition, under the orders of Emperor Mohammad Shah of Delhi, began collecting troops to oppose the plans of His Afghan Majesty.

This was too much for Ahmad Shah to brook, especially in the very beginning of his rule. He, therefore, marched against him with a large force.

Nasir Khan had, however, been making preparations at Peshawar to oppose the Durrani. While submitting to the Mughal Emperor, he had appealed to him for troops and money. He had



also raised recruits from among the Hurrah and Uzbeg tribes. On the other hand, Ahmad Shah had been writing to the Afghan Chiefs ever since his accession and they had been fired with national spirit. He had also entered into communication with the Afghans in Kabul who had evidently assured him of the co-operation. They would not fight for the Mughals against the Afghans. Even the leading Persian families in the Bala Hissar citadel of the capital had entered into a secret understanding with Ahmad Shah. And they made a common cause with the Afghans on his arrival at Kabul, under a promise that their chiefs should participate in the official appointments and advantages in the gifts of the sovereign and he treated all on a footing of equality.

The capital (Kabul) was defended for some time by a deputy of Nasir Khan but with the defection of the Afghans to Ahmad Shah Abdali, he lost all hope and fled away to Peshawar to join his master. Thus Kabul fell to Ahmad Shah Abdali.

From Kabul Ahmad sent a detachment to occupy Peshawar and plunder the country upto Attock on the Indus. At the news of the invader's approach, Nasir Khan found himself helpless because of continuously mounting fervour of the Afghan tribes for Ahmad Shah. He evacuated Peshawar, crossed the river and took refuge in the land of Hazara; but he was driven out from this district by another Afghan force under Ahmad's commander-in-chief Sardar Jahan Khan and fled to Lahore (November 15, 1747)<sup>1</sup> giving up all his property to plunder.

At this time, Shah Nawaz Khan, the governor of Lahore, was in secret correspondence with Ahmad Shah Durrani. Nasir Khan could not, therefore, be given a warm public reception. In fact, the governor hesitated even to meet him. Nasir Khan stayed for a few days in one of the chambers of Idgah—and on December 19, 1747, he was received in audience by Emperor Mohammad Shah and was given a dress of honour of six pieces, a sword, an elephant and a lakh of rupees in recognition of his loyalty to the Mughal Emperor.<sup>2</sup> Abdali now established his own rule in Peshawar, which city served as a very convenient point for the invasion of Hindustan with the man-power of Afghanistan behind him and no physical obstacle in front. The Khaibar Afghans quickly gathered round him and a plan of invasion was matured. But what were the motives of Ahmad Shah in undertaking his Indian

1. Refer to *Tuzkirah-i-Anandram*.

2. Dr. Ganda Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, p. 38.



expeditions. It is generally believed that Ahmad Shah did so in response to the invitation of Shah Nawaz Khan. This view is far from truth. The invitation of Shah Nawaz Khan served at best the catalytic agent but certainly it was not the real motivating factor. In fact, Ahmad Shah would have not shrunk from invading India, even if Shah Nawaz Khan had not invited him. Ahmad Shah had accompanied Nadir Shah to Hindustan, he had seen with his own eyes "the weakness of the Emperor, the imbecility of the Emperor, the inattention of the ministers, the spirit of independence which had crept among the grandees." Now after having conquered Qandhar, Kabul, Peshawar it was but natural that he should think of planning to attack on the country. Various other political compulsions also impelled him to do so. In the first place, he expected thereby to consolidate his powers at home. Though his was a national monarchy, he was himself, after all, an upstart. He hoped by means of his foreign wars to increase his reputation and thereby to win the loyalty of the Afghans. Not only would the Indian campaigns provide him with the expenses of maintaining his army but they should also enable him to heap favour and rewards of the Afghan chiefs. The Afghan cupidity had always been proverbial and this he hoped to satisfy by means of foreign wars. Moreover, these would enable him to carry the leaders with him, and the habits of military obedience would prepare the ground for a cheerful submission at home.

Leaving Peshawar about the middle of December 1747, Abdali crossed the Punjab rivers on bridges of boats and reached Lahore on the 8th January 1748. He had 12000 troops out of which 6000 were devoted and veteran soldiers of his own clan who had accompanied him from Persia. A number of Afghan adventurers from the frontier also joined him. This raised the invading force probably to 18000 men, but they were absolutely without cannon.

At Attock, he received the intelligence that Shah Nawaz Khan had changed his mind and was making preparation to oppose the Durrani. From Rohtas Ahmad sent in advance, Sabir Shah who proceeded to Lahore in company with Mohammad Yar Khan Zarab-Bashi, the mint master, ostensibly with the object of seeing his mother who lived there and visiting the tombs of local saints, but really to deliver to Hayatullah the invitation from Abdali to join him. On his arrival at Lahore, the Pir stayed at the house of Mufti Abdullah. His fame as a nacro-mancer had preceded him and it was talked about in the city that he had arrived there to render

the Mughal artillery ineffective by his charms. Having heard of this extraordinary Darvesh, Shah Nawaz Khan sent Diwan Kaura Mal and Adina Beg to find out the real purpose of the Pir. On their report he ordered the Darvesh and his companion to be imprisoned and kept under strict surveillance. In an interview between Sabir Shah and Shah Nawaz Khan, Sabir Shah told Shah Nawaz Khan that as the Emperor of India was not well-deposed towards him and was only looking for an opportunity to wreak his vengeance upon him, it was in his interest to accompany him to Ahmad Shah so that he might add to his honour and dignity and settle upon him the Wazirship of the country. These and other similar words having no effect upon Shah Nawaz Khan, Pir rebuked him, and used some harsh words which the young governor could not bear. He ordered the Pir to be handed over to his Bakshi, Khwaja Asmat-Ullah Khan who put him to death as ordered by pouring molten lead into his throat. Mohammad Yar Khan, the lone companion of the Pir, was set out at liberty as there was nothing objectionable against him.

After this, Abdali could no longer think of conciliating Shah Nawaz. He was greatly incensed at the murder of his high priest and resolved to cross the Ravi without any loss of time. On the 10th January, 1748, his soldiers forded the Ravi one by one and reached Shalimar Garden, four miles east of the city. The governor of Lahore sent a force under Jalhe Khan, a Pathan of Kasur, to oppose him but the Khan went over to the enemy with all his troops. Next day the force of Ahmad Shah appeared on the plain of Shah Baladil and the hermitage of Shah Hussain.

The advance posts of the defenders were two, the small fort of Hazarat Ishan held by Shah Nawaz's pay-master Asmat-Ullah Khan and an entrenchment close to the hermitage of Shah Baladil commanded by Lachin Beg. These two divisions, totalling 16000 men now issued to the plain to meet the enemy. Ahmad Shah began the battle with a much smaller number. He had no guns to silence those of Shah Nawaz Khan. He could see, therefore, that the larger the number of men he sent forward, the greater the loss of life they would suffer. He, therefore, detached about one thousand mounted musketeers from the main force. They rushed into the middle of the Mughals, fired their musket and quickly galloped back beyond the enemy's range. For the whole day neither side made bold to advance from the position taken by it. According to *Siyar-ul-Mutakbirin*, Shah Nawaz did not take

offensive because he had been told by Darvesh Shah Kalabali, an astrologer, that that day was bad for him and tomorrow victory would be his.

Abdali's horses however went on putting pressure on the Lahore forces. At about mid-day when Shah Nawaz Khan sat for his meals with Adina Beg and other Sardars, the Durrani horses attacked but had to retreat because of stiff resistance of 2000 Qizalbashes of the Lahore army. Soon after, the Durranis renewed their attack with greater force. The Qizalbashes were pushed back and the Durranis followed them into their trenches. This created confusion in the ranks of the Bakhshi Asmat-Ullah Khan and he called for immediate reinforcement. Shah Nawaz ordered Adina Beg to rush to Asmat-Ullah Khan but he stood like an indifferent spectator. The orders were repeated but without any avail. At about sunset, Adina Beg retreated into the city.

This, it seems, was taken by Indian troops for cease-fire for the day and they set to return to their trenches in the careless order that usually marked their retirement. The Afghan forces were quick to take advantage of the carelessness of the Indian forces and lost no time in delivering sudden attack. They charged them with so much ferocity that the imperialists were completely taken by surprise and driven off the field in hopeless rout. Adina Beg Khan, who was at this time in the city and had come up to the *haveli* of Zabardast Khan with the Bakhshi, made several efforts to go out with reinforcement but it was all in vain. For the first quarter of the night, he stood in the suburbs of the city and kept on firing the swivels and rockets not allowing Afghans to advance farther than the fortress of Hazrat Ishan which they had occupied. But all this was to serve no purpose. With the flight of the Bakhshi and other Sardars to the city, there was all panic in the army. Shah Nawaz Khan had wished to get down from his elephant and stay for the night in the camp to encourage his men and to resume fighting the next day. But at this critical moment a relation of his, the husband of his paternal aunt prevailed upon him to retire to safer quarters in the city. As soon as his elephant was seen moving to the city, the already panic-stricken soldiers became more panicky, with the result that they fled in all directions, hurrying towards the gates. The camp of Shah Nawaz was plundered by the daredevils among them. Shah Nawaz hastened to his elephant in the city, collected jewels and other valuables and fled to Delhi (11th January, 1748). His officers followed his example, each man

only thinking of saving himself. Qamur-ud-Din, instead of showing sympathy towards him instantly put him in confinement, possibly with a view to vent his anger for his previous misconduct.

The Abdali conqueror made his triumphant entry into the city. The rich capital of the Punjab lay utterly undefended and Abdali occupied it without any opposition whatsoever in the morning of the 12th January, 1748. A number of faithful officers of Yahiya Khan such as Mir Momin Khan, Mir Nimat Khan, Mir Amin Khan, Sayyad Jamal-ud-Din Khan who had all these months been kept in close confinement by Shah Nawaz Khan, soon after their release went on a mission of entreaty to Abdali's tent. For a ransom of 30 lakhs of rupees, the Afghan victor agreed to spare the city from a sack and issued orders to this effect to his soldiers. Even then many of the places, particularly in the Mughal Mohalla, were plundered and devastated. On the recommendation of Haji Mohammad Saeed Lahori, a local saint, Mohalla Lakhi and Abdullawari were left untouched.

The capture of Lahore more than doubled the strength of Ahmad Shah. Not only did he gain immense wealth in the form of the ransom of the city (22 lakhs immediately paid), the wealth and property of the Governor and his nobles but also he found a large quantity of artillery and small arms. Further all the horses and camels that he could find in the city and its neighbourhood were taken possession of for use of his men. With the acquisition of the new armaments, five or six thousand Afghan footmen were mobilised into cavalry units and a good number of rapidly portable light artillery was added to his military equipment.<sup>1</sup> Ahmad Shah stayed in Lahore for five weeks. During this short period the Zamindars of the Punjab paid their homage and the hill rajas sent their agents to him with presents and tendered their submission. He also issued a coin in his name bearing the following inscription:

Durr-i-Dauran Ahmad Shah Badshah

Zar-i-Dar-ul-Saltanat-i-Lahaur

Jalus Maihnat Manus Ahad.

King Ahmad Shah, Durri-Dauran Mint at the capital of Lahore, Auspicious year of the Reign, one Ahmad Shah set up a native Government at Lahore with Jalhe Khan an Afghan Chief of Kasur as Governor, Mir Momin Khan as his deputy and Lakhpat Rai as

1. Anand Ram, pp. 44-45.

*Siyar-ul-Mutakbrin*, pp. 862-63.

Diwan or the Chief Secretary and himself got busy making preparations for a much bigger contest with the might of the great Mughal empire. Having completed the preparations and feeling confident that he could face the regular army of Delhi on equal terms, he started from Lahore on the 19th February at the head of 12000 men and marched eastwards to Sirhind on the road to Delhi.

The demeanour of Imperial Government of Delhi was at once shocking and foolish. The Emperor had received many early warnings of the coming invasion, but infatuation has seized the court and even the fresh memory of the loss and humiliation suffered in consequence of Nadir's invasion could not awaken any of his officers to the needs of the situation. As early as 1st September, 1747 Mohammad Shah had received from Nasir Khan deputy the copy of the proclamation issued by Abdali on the 15th July appointing Mohammad Hashim Afridi the chieftain of all the Afridi tribesmen in the Peshawar district. About the middle of November, 1747 came the news of capture of Kabul of Abdali. Close on the heels of this was received the report of Abdali's subjugation of Peshawar. Nothing concrete was done by the Delhi authorities. Even when the Emperor received the tidings that the invader had taken Peshawar and he had advanced upto Attock (early in November, 1747) he did not realise the seriousness of the threat to Lahore. No doubt, he sent his advance tents out of Delhi towards the Punjab on the 23rd November, 1747 but for actually starting from his capital, a date was fixed three weeks later.

How to meet the danger from the north-west? On this question a fierce wordy battle was fought. Seasoned captains told the Emperor that unless he led the army in person, the ease-loving soldiers would not be able to face the veterans of Iran. The carpet knights of the Court, however, bragged that the Afghan upstart did not deserve the honour of the Shahan-i-Shah taking the forces in person against him and that any one of his nobles could bring him back a captive tied hand and foot.<sup>1</sup> The Wazir Qamar-ud-Din held the first view. The Emperor in speech agreed to his council but could never resolve on such action and constantly put off the date fixed for his starting.<sup>2</sup> Nothing was, therefore, done; in fact, inaction is always very dear to imbeciles.

On 22nd December, 1747 Mohammad Shah learnt that Abdali

1. J.N. Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Vol. I, p. 214.

2. Anand Ram, pp. 308-312.



had begun his march from Peshawar to Lahore with a strong force. But nothing was done to hasten to Shah Nawaz Khan who had definitely committed himself to safeguard the interests of the Emperor, against his earlier professions of loyalty to Ahmad Shah Abdali. As a matter of fact, Mohammad Shah had lived in Delhi for 28 years since his accession without ever going outside Delhi more than a few miles (except on two occasions) only. He had grown extremely ease-loving and in addition was now suffering from the effects of the habit of opium-eating. At this time he fell ill and was unable to move. Nor would he allow his only son Prince Ahmad to lead expedition. At long last, Wazir Qamar-ud-Din Khan was appointed supreme commander, with Safdar Jang (Subedar of Dwdh), Ishwari Singh (Raja of Jaipur and chief of the Rajput feudatories) and Nasir Khan (the late Governor of Kabul) as his assistant. Even after this the delay made by them was disgraceful.

The Mughal forces with its camp followers numbering more than two hundred thousand souls and encumbered with heavy artillery began its march. The capture of Lahore by Ahmad Shah struck terror into hearts of the soldiers. The generals begged the Emperor that he should send his son to lead them, and to revive the drooping spirit of the forces. Prince Ahmad joined the forces at Sonapat. On the 19th February, 1748 Karnal was crossed. Here it was learnt that Ali Mohammad Rohila, the Imperial Faujdar of Sirhind had deserted his post and fled to his home in the Bareilly district, thereby rendering the most important post between Lahore and Delhi defenceless. The Prince, therefore, pushed on as fast as he could and arrived near Sirhind on the 25th February, 1748.

The women of Wazir's harem and all the heavy baggage treasure and surplus stores and carts were left in the small fort at Sirhind with a garrison of 1000 horses and foot while the army advanced towards Sutlej.

The advancing army did not maintain any liaison with its depot Sirhind, nor did it send any detachment to hold Ludhiana, the place where Sutlej was crossed to reach Sirhind from Lahore. The intelligence of the Mughals was also very poor—so much so that even on reaching Sirhind, no information regarding the movements of Abdali's forces was available.

The Mughal forces in a leisurely manner moved on to Sutlej. Instead of crossing Sutlej at Ludhiana, the Mughal general decided to make a detour via Machhiwara, thus leaving the customary short



route far to the left. As against such incredible incompetence Abdali displayed usual alertness and activity. He left Lahore on the 19th February, 1748 and crossed the Sutlej at Ludhiana (1st March) and proceeded to Sirhind in the course of the following night. Early in the morning he captured Sirhind without much difficulty and all the military stores and treasures of the Mughal army except that was carried by the troops in the field fell into Abdali's hand and immensely strengthened him. The Mughals were obviously correspondingly depressed; their cordon was cut into and the invader was reported to be on march to Delhi with no obstacle to face. This disquieting news created alarm at Delhi where the people made a rush to flee from the city and thus escape a repetition of Nadir's massacre. The government, however, did not allow them to quit Delhi, but even then women ran outside in disguise. The Emperor ordered a detachment to go with artillery to Sarai Badli seven miles north west of Delhi. The defence of the imperial city were also strengthened. But the result of the battle of Manupur saved the city from all inconveniences.

But Abdali did not march towards Delhi. He waited for the enemy to be reckoned with. The news of the loss of Sirhind was brought to the prince's camp late on the 2nd March by ten Persian scouts whom Safdar Jang had sent out. Qamar-ud-Din would not believe it to be true as none of his own spies had returned. The Mughal army lost one precious day in sending out fresh scouts to verify the report. And when the news was found to be true "it so alarmed the Mughal chiefs and soldiers that they were on the point of dispersing without giving a battle." The prince immediately beat a hurried retreat from Bharadli towards Sirhind and reached Manupur, a village situated a few miles from the city. Here the Mughal army entrenched itself. The Abdali also entrenched his advance camp five miles north-west of Sirhind and at about the same distance in front of the Imperial camp at Manupur.

Various skirmishes took place between the detachment of the two armies located at different points but no decision occurred for about a month. In fact the plan of the Wazir Qamar-ud-Din was "to avoid an action, but to cut off the enemy's supply of food by inciting the neighbouring Zamindars to attack his foraging parties and in the end to overpower him with artillery fire." The Abdali also hesitated because he had not the necessary artillery to reply to the behaviour and more numerous artillery of the

Mughals. Shortly after the Durrani King brought a large gun from Lahore and having mounted it on a hillock on the 9th of March, 1748 began to kill Wazir's men and camels. This fact and the scarcity of water and the acute shortage of food provisions caused by the stoppage of supply by the roving hands of the enemy forced Wazir to decide to risk a pitched battle.

So the Eleventh March was fixed for the battle. On the appointed day, when Qamar-ud-Din Khan was engaged in morning prayer, a cannon ball from Durrani artillery struck him in the back. The Wazir knew that his wound was mortal. Calling his son Muin-ul-Mulk commonly known as Mir Mannu from the trenches, he told him, "My son, it is all over with me. But the Emperor's work is not yet finished. Before this news spread, do you quickly ride out and deliver the assault. When it is done, you may think of me."

The death of his father was very shocking for Mir Mannu indeed, but he showed great strength of mind and courage. He suppressed his filial tears and hurriedly buried the body of his father in the same tent where he received mortal injury from the cannon ball of the enemy. Immediately after, he rode his father's elephant and ordered the drums to be beaten. The tragic news was known to the Prince Abdul Mansur Khan, Safdar Jang, Saadat Khan, Zulfiqar Jang and Nasir Khan. It was given out that the Wazir had a severe attack of cold and had commissioned his son to lead the army in his place. The event so momentous could not be totally concealed. Mir Mannu imparted the news in secret to the captains of the Wazir's division and made a stirring appeal to them saying, "Whosoever wishes to come with me to the field of battle may do so, and he who does not, may go to his tent, for to take a flight during the fight is ruinous. As for me, as long as there is life in my body, I shall, with God's grace fight on." With these words he rushed to the field of action to oppose the advancing Durrani. The Mughal army about sixty thousand combatants was divided into five divisions with the chief command in the hands of Mir Mannu. The vanguard consisting of the Wazir's contingent of Turks was led by Mir Mannu assisted by his brothers, Nizam-ud-Din Khan, Fakhar-ud-Din Khan and Sadar-ud-Din and those of Ahmad Zaman Khan Talib-i-Jang and Adina Beg Khan of the Jullundur Doab. The right wing was commanded by Safdar Jang at the head of a picked body of Irani soldiers taken from Nadir's army besides Indians of the Purbia class. The left wing was formed

by a large contingent of Rajput horses under Ishwari Singh of Jaipur and other Rajas. The rear was commanded by Nasir Khan, the ex-governor of Kabul. In the centre, the command was held by prince Ahmad at the head of his personal guards, with Sayyad Salabat Khan and Dilawar Khan to assist him. In the actual fighting the vanguard formed one line abreast of the two wings. The Durrani, on the other hand, placed three thousand Qizalbash Iranis under the command of Mohammad Taqi Khan Sherazi and ordered him to move against Mir Mannu while he himself at the head of his Afghan veterans, advanced against Abul Mansur Khan, Safdar Jang.

The clash began at noon (11th March, 1748). The Afghans began the attack. Mohammad Taqi Khan Sherazi, the chief commander of Ahmad Shah Abdali, delivered assault upon Mir Mannu's troops but in spite of desperate fighting Mannu could not be dislodged from his position.

The Afghans, however, were more successful on their right where they were faced by the left wing of the Mughals commanded by Raja Ishwari Singh. A body of 3000 of Abdali's horsemen with 200 swivels carried on camels had formed itself into two divisions. Each half galloped upto within easy range of the Rajputs, delivered their fire and galloped back, the second group attacked the same day. Thus when the contest came to the decision of cold steel, the Rajputs found hundreds of their saddles being emptied at each volley without their being able to touch an enemy. This strange method of warfare shook the nerves of the Rajputs trained in the obsolete tactics of past two centuries. The Afghans seized the moment and drove into the confused crowd, cutting it up like the sections of a cucumber.<sup>1</sup>

The Rajput leader Ishwari Singh found his courage failing him and sought his safety in running away from the field of action. His example was quickly followed by his soldiers. According to Dr. Ganda Singh, "So precipitate was the fight that they threw their elephant drum and set fire to their extra luggage. Much of it was left on the field itself and, on the way, many fugitives and loaded camels were dropped uncared for."

Having defeated the left wing of the Mughal forces, the Abdali wheeled to his left and the rear of Mir Mannu's trenches, threatening the centre held by the Prince. Mannu turned round to check the advancing Afghans and there was a great loss of life

---

1. Sarkar, J.N., *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Vol. I, p. 229.

on both sides. There was panic among the Indians and many of them fled towards Delhi. It appeared as if the defeat of the Mughals was near.

Mannu then rose to the full length of his latent faculties and rushed upon the advancing Durranis. He was supported by Zulfiqar Jang, Saadat Khan and by Nasir Khan from the rear. The Mughals and Afghans came closer and grappled with one another. The battle raged so furiously that there was hardly an officer who remained unscathed. Mannu himself was bruised during the action. His brother Fakhur-ud-Din had been wounded in the foot and Adina Beg received bullet wounds.

In the meantime, Safdar Jang who commanded the Mughal right wing pushed back the Afghans. By the Shah's orders, a division of the Afghans and seven hundred camel swivels had moved up against Safdar Jang. The swivels occupied place of eminence and from there directed their fire into the Indian ranks. On this, Safdar Jang mounted his elephant to guide his troops. He detached one thousand and seven hundred Persian Sawars from his division, made them dismount and sent them up on foot to charge the Afghan swivels. The Persians, with their long muskets (Jazair) fired a volley at the Afghans and, killing a number of them rushed upon their camels and captured them. The remaining Afghans saved them by running back to their main division. Ahmad Shah sent a lashkar of Afghans to capture them but they could not face the deadly fire. This created a confusion in the ranks of the Afghans and it gave way before the advancing Sawars of Safdar Jang.<sup>1</sup>

Safdar Jang hardly has a sigh of relief when the intelligence was received by him to the effect that Mannu's van and Prince's centre were under heavy pressure. He immediately rushed to their assistance. The troops of Mannu and the Prince and those of Nasir Khan also took courage and fought with added courage. All this came as a surprise to the Afghans who found themselves encircled by superior numbers. The Afghans' condition was that of helplessness.

At this critical juncture came another calamity to add to the agonies of the Durranis. Some carts full of rockets which Abdali had captured caught fire from the recklessness of the plunderers. The sparks fell on the store of gun-powder and caused its explosion. During the process, a thousand of Abdali's soldiers were burnt to death, and utter disorder prevailed in their ranks.

1. *Mujmil-ul-Twarikh*, pp. 1007-1008.

According to Dr. Ganda Singh, the Abdali soldiers took the sound of the rockets 'Sh-Shah-ku, Sh-Shah-ku' as the cries of some evil spirits that had come from India and was hovering about in search of the Shah. This type of psychosis made the confusion worse confounded. The Afghan soldiers resisted no longer, but broke and fled.

Ahmad Shah Abdali, however, was too good a general to admit of defeat. He put a bold face on it and made a stand in a small mud fort at a short distance behind the battlefield, checking the Mughal advance by a musket fire. By the time the Mughals brought big guns to bear on the fort, night had fallen and the Afghans fled away under cover of darkness to Sirhind and he made preparation for his return to Afghanistan.

The Mughals were so much over-awed by the Shah, that they dared not follow their victory up at once, but deemed it wiser to keep a careful watch in their own trenches during the whole of the night. The Mughals did not set out in pursuit on the following day, nor even for four days after their victory as they were quite in dark as the enemy's real condition and exact position and rumours were spread in the camp that the commander-in-chief of Abdali had been killed and the Shah had been seriously wounded or slain. Abdali beguiled the Prince and Safdar Jang for a few days by sending envoys to him to settle terms for peace, and used this respite to get his broken army together and to send away his camp-baggage and treasure to Lahore quite unperceived. It was only on the 11th March, 1748, that the Mughal forces ventured to march out towards the Afghan camp but found it deserted. The Jungle which transversed Sirhind and the Sutlej made the pursuit very slow.

According to Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar, "The Mughals continued to feel their way towards that river, clinging together for safety and precaution rather like a camp in constant dread of a surprise than in the spirit of self-confident victors." The Afghan rearguard consisting of nearly two thousand horsemen, kept the Mughals engaged and side-tracked. On the 18th March, 1748 the Mughals recovered Sirhind and Abdali crossed over at Ludhiana a day before and left for Lahore, wherefrom he hurried back to his country via Peshawar to quell the rebellion of his nephew and deputy Luqman Khan. It seems that the Shah was not able to carry away all his baggage to Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup>

---

1. Dr. Ganda Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, p. 70.



The Mughals did not pursue the Afghans during their retreat for three reasons. Firstly, the Emperor Muhammad Shah, father of Prince Ahmad, was in poor health and the Prince was naturally anxious to return to Delhi. Secondly, Safdar Jang who aspired to be the next Prime Minister, evaded carrying out the Prince's order to cross the Sutlej and advance upon Lahore. He was, in fact, in greater hurry to rush to Delhi to achieve his object. Thirdly, the death of Wazir Qamar-ud-Din the father of Mir Mannu had robbed the hero of the battle of Manupur, not only of patronage but also of the hopes of support and encouragement. Safdar Jang was an old enemy of Qamar-ud-Din and he would do nothing which might, in any way, advance the interest of Mannu.

### **Effects of Abdali's First Invasion**

The stay and then defeat of Ahmad Shah Abdali had telling effect on the administration, the economy and the Sikh movement. Ahmad Shah Abdali having captured Lahore, had appointed Jalhe Khan to the governorship and Lakhpat Rai to the Diwanship and other persons to other exalted offices. Jalhe Khan was an Afghan fief-holder of Kasur. With his induction to the government, the administration began to be run in favour of the Afghans of the province and their over-lord Ahmad Shah. Turani Party that still had sufficient strength could not brook it and hence was sullen and biding their opportunity. Lakhpat Rai, being extremely shrewd and cunning, was more interested in playing his own game instead of committing himself completely to the cause of Ahmad Shah Abdali. Moreover, Abdali was yet occupied in the struggle for absolute supremacy in the Punjab and political barometer had not yet indicated the stability in political atmosphere. Under such circumstances when none could gauge precisely whereto the pendulum of loyalties would swing, the administration was bound to suffer. The Chaudharis or Zamindars in their respective areas or villages began to be unmindful of their duties towards the government, and they started acting as if there was no check on them. The small officials taking advantage of the confusion of the superior authority indulged in advancing their own interests. The people naturally suffered.

The defeat of Ahmad Shah made the condition worse. Hearing of the defeat of the Durrans in the battle of Manupur, Lakhpat Rai sent a message to Jalhe Khan saying, "Your patron has been defeated and has fled away. It is better for you also to



fly away safely or else you will be made a prisoner." Jalhe Khan left Lahore at once and Lakhpat Rai took the administration into his own hands. As a matter of fact, the news of the defeat of Ahmad Shah brought about another change in the government of the province, this time by Lakhpat Rai not to effect improvement in the administration but to negotiate with the victorious Mughals to secure his own position. How could these changes one after the other in quick succession during the period of three months or a little more and those too for promoting selfish ends of the interested parties give stable government? During the period of Abdali's first invasion, we have not come across any order spelling out any scheme for the welfare of the province.

On the other hand, the people suffered much economically. Ahmad Shah Abdali during his march towards Lahore plundered and ravaged villages around its route; he did not spare even the crops which could be as much valuable to him as to the Panjabis. At Lahore, he plundered and devastated the Mughal Muhalla, where the rich persons dwelt. In addition to the property and wealth thus gained, he got 30 lakhs of rupees. The property of the governor and his family, rich treasures and large quantities of war material, including guns, Rakhas and rockets, accumulated during the past thirty-five years, also fell into his hands. All the horses and camels that he could find in the city and its neighbourhood were taken possession of by him. By these acts, the province was naturally drained off its economic resources.

The economic potential of the people also suffered a lot because of Abdali's invasion. The industrialists and traders shrank back from investing their money on account of the political confusion. They had not yet forgotten the havoc of Nadir's invasion when they had to experience another invasion from one whom Nadir loved and considered him his successor.

So far as the effect on the Sikhs was concerned that was also deep and significant. The Sikhs took full advantage of the confusion created by the Shah and lost no time in giving a new shape to their organisation and new direction to their movement.

### **Sikh Movement and Ahmad Shah Abdali's First Invasion**

Early in November 1747, the rumours of the impending Durrani invasion spread all over the country. The Sikhs prepared themselves to play their role during the confusion which was sure to overtake the Punjab. They decided not to co-operate either with

the Mughals or with the Afghans because the success of these would harm their own cause. But they did not remain neutral in the sense that they were indifferent spectators. They played their game in their own way. As Ahmad Shah Durrani captured Lahore and established puppet native government, the Khalsa under the leadership of Jassa Singh and his associate generals Charat Singh, Karora Singh, Khushal Singh, Mit Singh Dallewalia and Sardar Sham Singh fell upon the camp of the Durrani at Noor-di-Sarai (a suburb of Lahore). They did not fight a pitched battle, as they could not afford to do so on account of the paucity of ammunition and other war-material. Their purpose was limited, to have the first-hand knowledge of the war machine of Ahmad Shah Durrani and no wonder they slipped away shortly after launching their attack. Jassa Singh, Kapur Singh and others crossed into the Doab and Sardar Sukha Singh, Charat Singh crossed the Beas and encamped in the neighbourhood of Kalanaur. Ahmad Shah Abdali did not have a time to settle scores with the Sikhs, as he was engaged in his preparations to face the Mughal armies, who were marching towards him to oust him from the Punjab. But Jalhe Khan, the Afghan governor of the Punjab, despatched a strong contingent of the natives immediately after Ahmad Shah Abdali left Lahore for Sirhind, and the Afghan soldiers that had been left behind to take care of Lahore, which formed the rear of Ahmad Shah Abdali under the command of Lakhpat Rai and Momin Khan, decided to crush the Sikhs who hovered round Kalanaur. As the news was received by the Sikhs, they at once crossed the river Sutlej and avoided pitched battle. The Lahore generals had to plan to proceed farther; but some of the Afghans were eager for seeing a Sikh engaged in fight.

Momin Khan who was well aware of the psychology of the Sikhs asked the Afghans to write provocative letter to them. Even this stratagem did not work. Then on the second day a special courier was sent to them to taunt them 'if they had courage and a grain of self-respect, they must come in the open and fight a duel with a Durrani soldier'. Charat Singh could not contain himself and with a double-edged sword in his hand, started rushing to the place in the middle of the sand of the river. Sukha Singh held him up and told him that the Durrani soldiers being clad in armour from head to foot, would not be vulnerable to his sword. He then himself put on the armour helmet and after Ardas (Sikh prayer) rode to the place where a Durrani soldier was waiting for him. A fierce duel took place, but at the end, Sukha Singh succeeded

in stabbing the contender to death. The Durrani soldiers lost their equipoise and attacked Sukha Singh but the Sikhs who were also prepared to meet any eventuality reached the spot instantaneously. Charat Singh rode at full speed to Sukha Singh, put him in the saddle behind him, and came back their side. In this contest, the Durrani were compelled to retreat to their side of the river, but they had some idea of the fighting skill of the Sikhs. According to Sayyad Ghulam Ali, the author of *Imad-ut-Saadat*, the Sikhs' matchlocks could strike a man from the distance of nearly eight hundred yards.

After this, Jassa Singh and other Sardars like Charat Singh Sukarchakiya, Jai Singh Ghanhiya, Hari Singh and others, reached Noorpur in north-east of Pathankot. The ruler of Noorpur submitted without offering resistance. Raja Gurdit Mal, the faujdar of hill territories was ordered forthwith by Diwan Lakhpat Rai to launch an attack on the Sikhs. He complied with his order and the battle took place near the villages of Sodra and Badra. Gurdit Mal besides having 5000 strong cavalry and 7000 infantry also had under his command, the Dogra army of Ranjit Dev Jammuwala, Jasrotia and Mankotia. The Sikhs' number was very slender, just 2000. The Sikhs under Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and on the advice of Hari Singh decided to spring a surprise by making a sudden attack. They very swiftly got mingled in the enemy ranks and plying their swords began to take a heavy toll of life. This put the enemy to rout. Raja Gurdit Mal saved his life with great difficulty and the Sikhs plundered his tent and he straightway reached Jammu. This happened in the second week of March 1748.

When Ahmad Shah Durrani had suffered defeat in the battle of Manupur near Sirhind and he was making preparations to return to Afghanistan,<sup>1</sup> the Sikhs moved into the vacuum created in the central Punjab by the Mughal-Afghan conflict. They worsted Adina Beg on or during the third week of March 1748 in an encounter which took place near Khanpur where Adina Beg after the defeat of Ahmad Shah at Manupur had just reached.

Adina Beg because of his pre-occupations elsewhere did not retaliate and the Sikhs came to Amritsar to liberate it from the Mughal Governor, Salabat Khan, who had been in his office since A.D. 1747. He had established pickets around Hari Mandir and the tank of nectar (Amritsar) to protect it from the Sikhs. He did achieve his aim for over a year but in the last week of 1748 taking

---

1. *Jassa Singh Binod*, Urdu, pp. 7-8.

advantage of the fluid political situation in the province, the Sikhs under the grand leadership of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia attacked Amritsar. Salabat Khan, who was a veteran general put up stout resistance but of no avail, because his soldiers were no match for the Khalsa veterans who had fought many battles and thus gained sufficient experience of contemporary warfare. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia with his double-edged sword chopped the head of Salabat Khan, the fact which struck terror among the enemy ranks. The soldiers of Salabat Khan ran pell-mell and Amritsar was captured by the Sikhs.<sup>1</sup> The Sikhs thereafter established their control over Amritsar and with the slogans of 'Sat Sri Akal' (Victory to God) resounding in the sky, they entered Sri Darbar Sahib. This was for the first time that the Khalsa could pay his obeisance here for many years.<sup>2</sup>

In the meantime, Abdali retreated back to his country. The Sikhs followed closely on the heels of Abdali from the eastern bank of the Sutlej. They would draw away a bit from the armies of Abdali in the day-time but would ambush him in the night and taking with them whatever booty fell into their hands, disappear in the jungles. In this way, the Sikhs harassed Abdali right upto the banks of the Chenab. Sardar Charat Singh Sukarchakia, who, later on established himself at Gujranwala, made several surprise attacks upon the Shah's rear as far as the Indus and relieved him of a number of horses and property.<sup>3</sup>

### **Dal Khalsa Jeo**

The Sikhs took advantage of the political instability in an other way. The awareness had dawned upon them that there was an ample scope for them to achieve their object of establishing Khalsa Raj which their Guru had predicted.<sup>4</sup> The Mughal rule was fast heading towards its downfall. The Abdali had planned to capture Punjab from Mughals. The Sikhs could also step in the political vacuum likely to be created in the wake of the doom of

1. Dr. Ganda Singh, *Jassa Singh Ahluwalia*, p. 65 (Pbi).

2. Lepel Griffin, *Rajas of the Punjab*, p. 50.  
*Jassa Singh Binod*, p. 69.

3. Bakht Mal, *Khalsa Namah*, p. 32.  
*Umdat-ut-Twarikh* (i), p. 127.

Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs* (1849) pp. 100-101.

4. Sita Ram Kohli, 'Struggle over the Panjab'—an article in the book *Essays presented to Sir Jadunath Sarkar*.

the Mughal Government in the province. But to achieve the object, it was essential that the organisational aspect of the Khalsa must be taken care of.

In A.D. 1745, the Sikhs had formed themselves into twenty-five small bands, in which they welcomed all the fresh recruits and supplied them with arms and horses. These bands did remarkable work. They enabled the Sikhs to withstand the persecutions launched by the Mughal Government. They popularised the Sikh cause among the people. They provided opportunity for the leadership to grow and to exhibit its qualities. They enthused the Sikhs with the fervour for the cause and with the will to dare and die. If the Sikhs were able to withstand the persecutions launched by the Mughal Government, the credit largely goes to these bands. Upto the Abdali's invasion the number of these bands had risen to sixty-five.

These associations, in spite of their praise-worthy career did not have unity of command and this was, perhaps, one of the major reasons that their leaders had been so far contented with small scale operations. They had no occasion to unite their forces except in the Small Ghallughara, where also they had not fought under the command of one supreme leader.

Abdali's invasion had added another dimension to the Khalsa's programme. Now it became clear to them that the Afghans were determined to capture Punjab to make it a part of the Afghan Empire. This was also well-known to them that the Mughal Empire, much less the Mughal Governor of the Punjab, with its dissipating central authority, recalcitrant Mansabdars, faction-ridden court, the selfish and ego-centric wazirs, and imbecile kings would not be able to withstand the thrust of the Afghans led by the greatest general of Asia, Ahmad Shah Abdali. The defeat of Ahmad Shah Abdali at Manupur, instead of exposing Abdali's weakness, served otherwise. It exposed the weaknesses of Delhi Government and it, therefore, had no effect on the invader except that his confidence was redoubled and his determination reinforced. Under the circumstances, the Sikh leadership could clearly see that the annexation of the Punjab to Afghanistan was a matter of time.

What should be its role? Should it succumb to the new yoke? Should it make common cause with the Mughals? The Sikhs, very wisely, bided their time and decided to be masterly inactive, at least during the beginning of the Afghan-Mughal conflict, without



aligning themselves with either the Afghans, or the Mughals. But the masterly inactivity could work only if they were fully organised under one supreme command, particularly when they were considered to be rival force both by the Mughal Government and the Afghan invaders.

So constrained by the circumstances and impelled by the fervour to advance the cause of the Khalsa, some of the far-seeing talented Sikh leaders realized the need of widening the circle of attachment existing between the soldiers and Sardars in each group, and this could be effected only by uniting them under one supreme command, thus binding each individual not only with the colleagues and the chief but also with the whole Panth. It was also felt that the independent position of as many as 65 chiefs whose number was rapidly increasing, would not lead to any solidarity in making them a power without taking such a step. On the other hand, there was a danger that the feelings of jealousy and selfishness might arise among them if they were allowed to follow their own line of action. Luckily, for the Sikhs, a very capable leader who possessed remarkable power of organisation and commanded respect among all the Sikhs appeared on the scene. He was Jassa Singh Ahluwalia who had received training under the famous leader Nawab Kapur Singh. The Nawab was the most venerable Sikh leader. Owing to the constant help and guidance of the Nawab and his own sterling virtues, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia had come to occupy a very prominent position among the Sikhs leaders. The Nawab was growing old and he wanted to give the leadership of the Khalsa to somebody else. He had his eye on the promising Jassa Singh and he was on the lookout for an opportunity to do so.

The opportunity afforded itself when Ahmad Shah Abdali had retired from the province and no one else had yet taken over the charge of the governorship of the province. The 29th day of March, 1748 was the sacred day of Baisakhi and the Sikhs assembled at Amritsar. Nawab Kapur Singh appealed to the Sikhs for solidarity. His proposal was accepted according to which the sixty-five associations were brought together, and redivided into twelve associations each under its own leader and with its own title and banner but varying in strength. The twelve sections together were named as Dal Khalsa, the supreme command of which was handed over to Jassa Singh Ahluwalia in response to the appeal of Nawab Kapur Singh.

The twelve associations (Jathas) thus organised were :



- (i) *Ahluwalia Jatha* under the leadership of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia who, in addition to it, held the chief command of the 'Dal Khalsa' at the time of any expedition or battle.
- (ii) *Faizal Puria* or *Singh Puria Jatha*, the leader of which was Nawab Kapur Singh.
- (iii) *Sukarchakia Jatha*, under the leadership of Naudh Singh, the great grandfather of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.
- (iv) *Nishanwalia Jatha*, the leader of which was the flag-bearer of the Dal Khalsa.
- (v) *Bhangian Jatha*, under the leadership of Sardar Hari Singh of village Panjwar.
- (vi) *Kanhiyan Jatha*, whose leader was Sardar Jai Singh Kanhiya, of village Kahna, in district Lahore.
- (vii) *Nakai Jatha*, under Hira Singh Nakai of village Bahawal in Chunian Tehsil of Lahore district.
- (viii) *Dallewalia Jatha*, under Gulab Singh of village Dallewal near Dera Baba Nanak.
- (ix) *Shahidi Jatha*, under the leadership of Baba Deep Singh. The Jatha came to be called 'Shahidi' because of their leader's martyrdom while fighting against the Afghans.
- (x) *Karor Singhia Jatha*, under Karora Singh of Paijagarh.
- (xi) *Singhaniya Jatha*, under the leadership of Sardar Nand Singh of village Saghane. The Jatha later came to be known as Ramgarhia.
- (xii) *Phulkian Jatha* was organised under Ala Singh in the cis-Sutlej region of the Punjab.<sup>1</sup>

Rules were drafted for the conduct of the affairs, although they being very simple did not partake the nature of the modern enactments of the legislative assemblies. Every Sikh who believed in the tenets of Guru Gobind Singh was considered a member of the Dal Khalsa without any need being felt to secure his willingness but none could be admitted into active service unless he possessed a horse of his own. Each person had a freedom to join any of the twelve Jathas. Every individual had the right of choosing the leader he would serve.

The joint forces of twelve Jathas under one supreme command assumed the denomination of the Dal Khalsa. "The chiefs had

---

1. Phulkian Misl strictly speaking should not be named as Misl. See the Chapter on Misls

agreed by common consent that at such times some one from among themselves should be appointed from time to time to be the head of the Dal to guide them in all matters requiring united action, while the other eleven chiefs were to constitute an advisory body or council of war.<sup>1</sup> The assemblage of the twelve sections of the Khalsa and of those people who had been baptised at Amritsar was given the name of Sarbat Khalsa or the entire Panth. This entire body was to be the central body, meetings of which would be called by the Akalis at Amritsar, preferably.

These meetings were usually held twice a year at Amritsar on the occasions of the Baisakhi and Diwali festivals which generally fall in April and October respectively. At these times, the Sikh chiefs had a special council under the presidentship of the chief leader and passed resolutions (Gurmatas) on matters of more than ordinary interest to the Panth. The Akalis, or men wholly and solely devoted to war and worship formed the central league of the Sikh religion. They had the sole direction of all religious affairs at Amritsar. All the cases of religion were referred to them and thus they played the part of the defenders of the faith. They were stern zealots who maintain the purity of the Sikh doctrines, watched over the general conduct of the Sikhs by exercising a fierce scrutiny as censors and took a prominent part in conducting the National Council. They initiated converts, imposed fines upon those who broke the laws of the community, and in the event of disobedience prevented them from performing worship or going through any religious ceremony at Amritsar. In this way, a kind of federal union was established and the leader of the Dal Khalsa was looked upon as the head of the church and state.

In each of the sections, its chief was to be the supreme to be obeyed by its members, of course, within the interests of the Khalsa. It was the duty of each chief to look after and fulfil the requirements of his followers and in fact, it was only in this way that they could retain them in their service or else a little indifference on their part was sufficient to cause their desertion and going over to another chief who was ever-ready to accord them a warm welcome. The followers did not get any fixed salary and rendered voluntary service. This fact secured not only good treatment from the chiefs, but also a share in the booty of land. All the booty taken was divided proportionately among the chiefs according to the number of their followers. The chiefs subdivided

---

1. Dr. H.R. Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. I, p. 54.

in further among their men. Even the booty falling into the hands of a certain chief as a result of some operation which he took on his own, was to be distributed by him among his followers. There was perfect harmony between the chief and his followers and among chiefs because there was honesty of purpose, common grievances, a strong bond of brotherhood according to the commands of the last Guru and as found in the bond of 'Pahul'. The singleness of purpose and harmony made the Dal Khalsa the strongest military body of the day and prepared the way for the establishment as a political power.

The Sikh chiefs of different Misls forming the Dal Khalsa were highly religious, very tall in wisdom and foresight, great soldiers and commanders and wonderful strategists. With such qualities they were sure to be excellent builders of Sikh power. They needed tools on which they could absolutely rely upon. Fortunately, these were supplied to them by Sikh soldiers under them equally committed to the Sikh cause like them and ever-ready to do anything at their beck and call in the service of the Panth. No wonder, Sardars as well as soldiers under them united in one common object of fighting against the tyranny of the ruling elites and establishing Khalsa Rule, passed on from glory to glory.

The organisation of Dal Khalsa was a landmark in the history of the Punjab, because it ushered in a new era, in which the Sikhs knit their scattered bands into a more homogeneous organisation, channelising their energy in the service of the cause of expelling the foreigners from the Punjab and the fulfilment of the prophecy of Guru Gobind Singh of the establishment of a Khalsa State.

Incidentally, the creation of the Dal Khalsa marked the retirement of the great Sikh hero, Nawab Kapur Singh. For a quarter of a century Nawab Kapur Singh had led the Sikhs through most trying and difficult times. Few men had ever to contend with heavier odds, few ever engaged in such an unequal fight. Yet, striving valiantly against strenuous circumstances, he step by step, built up the sovereignty of the Khalsa and by the time he retired, he had conferred on the Dal the lineaments of an independent state. In the midst of the life-long pre-occupation with war and fighting, he maintained an unassailable standard and was universally esteemed for his devout character, heroic spirit and foresight.

It has often been held that Dal Khalsa Jeo was a military organisation and nothing more. European writers including

Malcolm and Cunningham et al are of this opinion. Even the Sikh scholars of the eminence of Giani Gian Singh and Rattan Singh Bhangu have also held this opinion. Both categories of scholars therefore have designated the organisation in such a way that the name reflected only its military nature. Their judgement seems to have sprung from their wrong perception of the activities of the Dal Khalsa Jeo—The reason being that they focussed on its military activities and did not allow their mental coverage to take note of its other functions.

Dal Khalsa Jeo consisted of different bands of the Sikhs committed to the Sikh ideals and practices. Their main thrust was to safeguard Sikhism in all its aspects from the onslaughts of unjust sectarian Mughal government and other Islamic fundamentalists including the Afghans led by Ahmad Shah Abdali, the ruthless greatest military general of Asia, as also to promote the cause of Sikh religion which in their calculation, was the sure high-way to the elevation of man both spiritually and morally. For this purpose, they fought battles and led expeditions far and wide wherever they deemed it appropriate. Side by side, they never forgot their religious duties, namely to preach Sikh ideology. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, the indisputed leader of the Dal Khalsa Jeo, was himself a great Sikh, a beau ideal of the Khalsa, a great Kirtania, a singer of Guru's Shabads in accompaniment with 'Rabab' a musical instrument first made use of in the province of Rajasthan in India. He was also a fervent reciter of Gurbani. His reverence for 'Guru Shabad' was so deep that he would steal every opportunity to recite it. At one time, his inner urge so enthused him that he single-handed completed the recitation of the whole Guru Granth Sahib from page 1 to the last page in one sitting of forty-eight hours. He took pleasure in initiating people into Sikhism by administering them 'Khande di Pahul'—the form of Sikh baptism. He was very particular that the members of his Misl were baptised. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, Jai Singh Kaniya, Hari Singh Bhangi, Deep Singh of Shaheed Misl, Karor Singhia Sardars including Baghel Singh et al—all were alive to their duties to their Gurus and their ideology. According to Bhagat Singh almost all the Sardars, especially of the first generations of the chiefs of the Misls, never showed laxity towards their religion and did their best to project it in right perspective by their own examples as well as by their conduct and social actions. This was one of the major factors that a large number of people mainly of Majha and Malwa regions embraced

Sikhism. This happened despite the fact that Sikhism and Sikh society were under great stress because of the acute ire of Mughal Imperialism hand in glove with Muslim fundamentalists. Dal Khalsa Jeo strived their best to uphold and suffuse Sikh value among people. They did not allow caste spirit and caste system to vitiate Sikhs society. The credit indeed does go to the Dal that as long as their domination existed, caste remained a 'non-issue'. Even the so-called low caste people helmed the Sikh affairs and one of the Misls called Nishanwalia Misl consisting of mainly such people, was the standard bearer of Dal Khalsa Jeo. Hordes of Sikhs who played their splendid roles in building Khalsa power were those who originally belonged to the so-called low castes. They very doggedly and with utmost resilience continued to uphold the concept of Khalsa ladyhood as preached by Guru Nanak and his successors. Whenever any individual or a group tried to humiliate ladies they dealt with him/them with severity. Examples are aglore in the history of the Punjab that they fought for the honour of the ladies even at the risk of their lives. At Kasur in their attempt to get the wife of a Brahmin liberated from the harem of Usman Khan, they had to make a lot of sacrifice. Likewise, in 1797 Bedi Ran Singh led a crusade against Ahmad Shahanchi Bakshi who, according to Bute Shah "committed gross atrocities in the neighbourhood of Gujrat, and forcibly took to wife a Brahmin girl, besides violating the virginity of many other pretty girls. In this crusade nearly nineteen Sardars including Jodh Singh Ramgarhia, Tara Singh Gaiba, Bagh Singh Ahluwalia, Bhag Singh Shaheed took part. A severe fighting raged for three days. Ran Singh Bedi and hundreds of Sikhs lost their lives. But the Brahmin girl was restored to her parents and the licentious Shahanchi Bakshi was shot dead.

Dal Khalsa Jeo always took care that its constituents paid proper respect to Sri Guru Granth Sahib and they recited and listened to Guru's Word both in the morning and evening. No expedition was led without offering 'Ardas'.

Special emphasis was laid on the raising of gurdwaras as these formed basic units of Sikh organisation. In 1783, Dal Khalsa Jeo attacked and occupied Delhi. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia alongwith other chieftains entered Red Fort. A settlement was arrived at between the Dal Khalsa Jeo and Shah Alam II. One of the important clauses of the settlement was that Baghel Singh will stay at Delhi for about a year to construct seven gurdwaras on the spots which were associated with the Gurus.

## Chapter 5

### MUIN-UL-MULK (MIR MANNU)

(11th April 1748—November 1753)

As the news of the defeat of Ahmad Shah Abdali reached the Emperor Muhammad Shah, he appointed late Wazir's son, Muin-ul-Mulk (Mir Mannu) to the governorship of Lahore. In doing so, Muhammad Shah showed genuine statesmanship for Mir Mannu on account of his great valour, wise diplomacy and discipline, was thought to be the best choice in order to inspire awe in the minds of the future invaders from the north-west as also to administer the Punjab affairs effectively and efficiently.

On his arrival in Lahore Mir Mannu ordered the arrest of Jalhe Khan and Diwan Lakhpat Rai appointed by Ahmad Shah Abdali. A fine of Rs. 30 lakhs was imposed on Diwan and in his place Diwan Kaura Mal was appointed by him as his Naib and Diwan of his court. Out of Rs. 30 lakhs Lakhpat Rai was able to pay Rs. 18 lakhs. The auction of his house and property brought an amount of 2 lakhs more and in lieu of the remaining amount of Rs. 10 lakhs he had to undergo imprisonment.<sup>1</sup>

The task for Muin-ul-Mulk to accomplish was not an easy one. The civil war between Yahiya Khan and Shah Nawaz Khan, the sons of the late viceroy Zakariya Khan and the subsequent Afghan invasion had completely disintegrated the provincial administration, swept away the central authority and introduced anarchy. The Sikhs had found favourable opportunities in these upheavals to advance their goal and had extended their depredations on a large scale.

---

1. Diwan Kaura Mal knew how Lakhpat Rai had got thousands of innocent Sikhs massacred and tortured. Therefore he agreed to pay the remaining amount of Rs. 10 lakhs on the condition that Lakhpat Rai be handed over to him. What objection could Mir Mannu have to this. Therefore Kaura Mal deposited this amount and handed over Lakhpat Rai to the Singhs who threw him in a prison bound hand and foot where he had to pass through a veritable hell for his misdeeds. Khushwaqt Rai, *Tarikh-i-Sikhan*, p. 67.



The lawless people also had increased their nefarious activities. To cap it all, Mannu had very meagre resources when he began his rule.

Besides the troubles in his own government, Muin-ul-Mulk was unfortunately called upon to fight against the machinations of Safdar Jang, the New Delhi Wazir. "This new Imperial Wazir was the malignant star in the Delhi firmament. Devoid of far-sighted statesmanship, patriotism or devotion to the throne, he was destined to ruin the Mughal Empire by pursuing a policy of blind aggrandisement. His one thought was how to ensure himself in the Delhi Government by raising around himself a ring of dependable clients at court and in the provinces. The Persian party among the nobles with Shia recruits of other races was to be installed in office everywhere." Mannu did not fit in the conceptual frame-work of Safdar Jang on account of several reasons. In the first place, he had all the prestige and honour of being the son of late Wazir Qamar-ud-Din whose dynasty had held the Wazirship for thirty years, ever since the fall of the Sayyad brothers, and thus could lay legitimate claim to the Wazirship. Secondly, crowned with the laurels of Manupur, he could prove a formidable rival for Wazirship and the rallying centre of the Turki party only if he was firmly established in the province. In view of all this, Safdar Jang was bent upon bringing about Mir Mannu's ruin.

The first instrument of this malicious design was Nasir Khan, the ex-governor of Kabul, who was recently living in Delhi in unemployment and official neglect. He came to Muin-ul-mulk to seek employment. Muin-ul-mulk was glad to have such an experienced administrator under him and appointed him to the administration of the four Mahals (Pasrur, Sialkot, Gujrat, Aurangabad) in 1748. The ungrateful Nasir Khan after about a year of service felt himself grown strong enough to turn against his benefactor. He listened to Safdar Jang's seductive message urging him to increase his army, fight Muin and wrest from his grasp the Subedari of Lahore, which would then be formally conferred upon him by a letter patent from the court through the Wazir's influence.<sup>1</sup> To give effect to his schemes, Nasir Khan increased his army and seduced 1000 of Mannu's Uzbek troops by temptations of higher salary. This ungratefulness offended Muin who with great promptitude marched to Sialkot and after a four hour's battle drove

1. *Tarikh-i-Ahmad Shahi*, p. 65.

*Farbat-un-Nazirin* in Elliot and Dowson, VIII, p. 166.

Nasir Khan in utter rout to Delhi. The battle was fought in July 1750.

Another trouble Muin was called upon to face was the revolt of Shah Nawaz Khan. The root cause of this trouble was also Safdar Jang who had found a useful tool for this purpose in Shah Nawaz Khan, who though a Turk by birth, had become Shia like Safdar Jang. The Wazir told him, "The Subedari of Lahore is your rightful heritage. Prepare yourself to win it by all means. Go to Multan there increase your army and expel Muin from Lahore by force."<sup>1</sup>

Shah Nawaz Khan, having received the letter of appointment as subedar of the province, left for Multan which was under the administrative charge of Mannu. Shortly afterwards, at Multan, he gathered 15,000 men, horse and foot round his banner—quite a large number of them were Mannu's soldiers whom he had won through promise of higher pay. Then he wrote to Muin asking for permission to visit his father's tomb at Lahore.

Trick being too apparent, Muin took prompt action. He sent Diwan Kaura Mal and Bakhshi Asmat Khan at the head of a force to Multan.<sup>2</sup> At this critical juncture, Diwan Kaura Mal advised Muin to enlist the Sikhs in his army. Muin agreed and Kaura Mal took a strong body of the Sikhs with him to Multan.<sup>3</sup>

A sharp engagement took place between the opponents. Shah Nawaz Khan fought gallantly but was ultimately defeated. Kaura Mal cut off Shah Nawaz's head and sent it to Muin who being pleased with his Diwan's splendid achievement conferred upon him the title of Maharaja and installed him in the subordinate governorship of the province of Multan. The services of the Sikhs were highly rewarded by Diwan Kaura Mal.

### **Mughal-Afghan Conflict—Second Invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali (November 1748)**

Ahmad Shah Abdali's defeat at Manupur was not such that he could be constrained from pursuing his object of giving staggering blow to the Imperial authority in India and making Punjab as part of his Empire. After the suppression of the revolt of Luqman Khan, Ahmad Shah decided in favour of an invasion

1. J.N. Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Vol. I, p. 416.

*Tarikh-i-Ahmad Shahi*, pp. 67-68.

2. *Ibid*, p. 417.

3. Rattan Singh, *Prachin Panth Parkash*, p. 409.

Gian Singh, *Shamsber Khalsa*.

of India. Various factors operated on him to take this decision. First, Mir Mannu, the governor of the Punjab had by this time established himself in his government on the eastern frontier of Afghanistan and his strength in men and material was daily increasing. He could easily threaten and disturb Peshawar. Secondly, Mir Mannu had employed Nasir Khan, the ex-governor of Kabul, with the promise to help him to regain Kabul. The combined forces of Nasir Khan and Mir Mannu could be a source of danger to Ahmad Shah Abdali. Thirdly, Ahmad Shah was eager for the conquest of Herat, the home of Abdali tribe. With discredit of the defeat in India, he could not march with pride for the conquest of Herat from the Persians who had won glory as conquerors of India.

The political situation in the Imperial capital at Delhi was also favourable for an invasion of India. Ahmad Shah, the new Emperor of India was good for nothing. His boyhood and youth were spent in the harem and he had received no training in the art of war or governance. "Dull of nature, indolent by habit and given to sensual pleasures, he was a puppet in the hands of the eunuchs of the harem and danced to the tune of selfish and vulgar courtiers. The Prime Minister, Safdar Jang, looked more to his own interests than to those of the state. He was busy at weaving the web of conspiracy to bring about the fall of Muin. This being so, the Afghan king could foresee that in case of his invasion, Mannu would not be helped by the Delhi people.

Ahmad Shah Abdali marched upon the Punjab before the close of the year 1748. He sent orders, in advance, to the tribes of Peshawar and its neighbourhood to keep ready to join him during his march. These orders were carried out and the tribes met him at their respective stages. On his arrival at Peshawar, he paid a visit to Sheikh Umar, a well-known saint and received his blessings. The Afghan forces reached the Chenab without facing any obstacle.

Hearing of the Shah's advance towards Lahore, Mannu issued out of Lahore to check the invader's progress on the Chenab. He appointed Sayyad Ivaz Khan to officiate for him at Lahore during his absence. To boost the morale of the army, he paid them their arrears of pay out of his personal treasury—Government treasury being empty. He also sent fast messengers to Delhi for reinforcement and instructions. In the meanwhile, he along with Adina Beg and Mehdi Ali, set up his camp at Sohdera on the bank of the Chenab. Not finding himself strong enough to face the

Durrani, he could not run the risk of a general action and kept waiting for reinforcements from Delhi. But he waited in vain. Abdali was also not strong enough to press for decisive war because according to J.N. Sarkar, this expedition of Abdali had a limited purpose of provoking the delusive strength of the Imperial frontier. A few skirmishes however, took place and no decisive battle was fought.

Ahmad Shah Abdali, then, resorted to a stratagem. He divided his army into two sections, one under his own command to keep Muin engaged at Sohdera and the other under the command of his general Sardar Jahan Khan to ravage the country in the neighbourhood of Lahore. Jahan Khan devastated the whole land and carried fire and sword wherever he went. He reached as far as Shahdara; but he could not cross over to the city to capture it because of the stiff resistance put up by Ivaz Khan.

The news of the invasion of Abdali and its attendant's devastation were constantly reaching Delhi, but none thought of sending troops and money to assist the governor of Lahore. On the contrary, the Wazir, says the author of the *Tarikh-i-Ahmad Shahi*, was not a little pleased to hear of his embarrassment.<sup>1</sup> Muin was thus left by the central government to his own resources.

At this juncture, when the morale of Muin had sagged, because of indifference of the central authorities, the Shah sent a letter to Muin to surrender. Muin readily accepted the proposal and sent Pir Sheikh Abdul Qadir and Allama Maulvi Abdullah to settle the terms of peace. According to the peace treaty, Abdali was promised 14 lakhs of rupees as the annual surplus revenue of the 'four Mahals'—Sialkot, Pasrur, Gujrat and Aurangabad—which Muhammad Shah had assigned to Nadir Shah by treaty. The four Mahals were no doubt to be governed by the Delhi Emperor's agents and in his name; but the Afghans, all the same, got the first slice of India proper.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore the treaty raised the prestige of the Abdali, and added the annual revenue of 14 lakhs of rupees to his revenues. It also brought the victor of Manupur to his knees and exposed the weakness of the Mughal Empire. Besides this, the invasion inflicted economic hardship on the people as well the government. Moreover, the area between Lahore and the Chenab was ravaged and devastated by Jahan Khan with the result that

1. Elliot and Dowson, vol. viii, page 115.

2. J.N. Sarkar, *Full of the Mughal Empire*, Vol. I, p. 419.

the people deserted their homes and fields. The administration of the province also suffered. The calculated indifference of the Delhi authorities gave rise, in its turn, to political speculation which induced an element of political instability and uncertainty.

### Resettlement of the Punjab Affairs— Third Invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali

Immediately after Ahmad Shah left Punjab, Muin addressed himself to the task of setting the administrative affairs of the Punjab. He took stringent measures against the Sikhs. He strengthened his armed forces by fresh recruits and equipment.<sup>1</sup> A new type of light guns known as Jizairs (long fire-locks) was manufactured by the state foundries and a troop of 900 such gunners was soon added to the army of Lahore.

He crushed the revolt of Shah Nawaz Khan and successfully drove the ungrateful Nasir Khan out of 'Char Mahal' to Delhi. He gathered around himself a band of devoted and intelligent officials such as Diwan Kaura Mal, Ivaz Khan et al.

All these steps emboldened him to the extent that he began to entertain the thoughts of becoming independent of Ahmad Shah, and as a first step, he stopped payment of the annual tribute for the 'four mahals' promised by the settlement of 1749. At the end of the first year Raja Sukh Jiwan had been sent to Lahore to realize the dues. He had returned home with only a nominal payment. Soon after, Ahmad Shah despatched another envoy Harun Khan who arrived in the neighbourhood of Lahore on the 3rd of October, 1751. On the twenty-seventh day, he had an interview with Muin and impressed upon him the desirability of making an immediate payment of the dues. Muin delayed the conclusion of negotiations to gain time for the arrival of Kaura Mal, whom he had summoned from Multan. On the arrival of Kaura Mal about the middle of November, Harun Khan was told that there was no possibility of any payment and that they were ready to receive Shah with shot and shell. He observed at the military preparations at Lahore and war materials of Kaura Mal and returned to Shah to report what had transpired between Muin and himself.

1. Dr. H.R. Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, p. 64.

Miskin—67-8. The author tells us that the governor Muin-ul-Mulk took a keen interest in watching the exercises and manoeuvre of these new troops and bestowed as prizes silver bangles and other gifts on the Jizaiches with his own hands.

Ahmad Shah, who regarded the non-payment of the revenue on the part of Mir Mannu as an expression of the latter's assertion for independence had already left Kabul on September 21, 1751 and had encamped at Peshawar. The report of Harun Khan whipped up his anger and Ahmad Shah ordered the advance guard under Sardar Jahan Khan to reach Rohtas. He, on his part, made endeavours to bring Muin to his knees without resorting to cold steel. He sent a message to Mannu saying, "It had been agreed upon that the revenue of the four Mahals assigned to Kabul would be regularly remitted. Nothing has been sent so far. This faithlessness has come from your side. That is why I have come here. You had better sent to me twenty-four lakhs of rupees on account of three years' dues, so that I may go back." But Muin did not bend and replied, "Nasir Khan has run away with two years's revenue and has misbehaved towards me. Only one years' revenue is due from me. If that is your object, say that, so that I may send the money to you. If you want to fight, I am also ready." Simultaneously, he began to mature plans of his military preparations with greater vigour. He recruited a large number of new men, including two hundred horsemen, who had come from Kashmir with Mehdi Ali Khan and Shams-ud-Din Yasowal. Mehdi Ali Khan and Adina Beg had come from Sialkot and Jullundur Doab respectively, Kaura Mal along with his forces had already arrived from Multan. Even the help of the Sikhs who were otherwise considered the enemy of the state was sought. According to Dr. Ganda Singh, nearly ten thousand Sikhs, under the command of Sukha Singh Mari Kambo and Sardar Sangat Singh came to help Mannu.

The Shah, undeterred by the preparations of Mannu, marched on to Lahore. He received 9 lakhs of rupees from Mannu when he was about to cross the Indus. Since this amount was far less than what had been stipulated in the agreement. Shah continued his march and reached Kotla Sayyadan near Wazirabad on December 4, 1751 wherefrom he proceeded to Lahore.

Muin-ul-Mulk, having completed his preparations came out of Lahore and crossing the Ravi, encamped at Sarai Balkhian, about four kos from Lahore. He appointed Ivaz Khan, Deputy Governor of Lahore and sent the Begams—his mother, Sholapuri Begam, his wife, Murad Begam (also called Mughlani Begam) and his daughter Umda Begam and the other ladies of the family—to Jammu thereby spreading panic among the people of Lahore.



While Mir Mannu was encamped at Sarai Balkhian waiting for the contest with the Shah, the roving parties of the advance army under Sardar Jahan Khan ravaged the country lying between the Chenab and the Ravi. Not unoften, the advance bodies of the two armies came in contact with one another and fought many skirmishes; but no pitched battle was fought.

The Shah then made a daring move. Leaving his camp standing at some distance in front of Mannu's position, he, with a picked light force, made a wide detour to the right round the latter's camp, suddenly arrived in the environs of Lahore and took post near the shrine of Baladil. The Afghan vanguard under Jahan Khan occupied the Faiz Bakhsh garden.

Mannu, at this, hastened back towards Lahore. On reaching the bank of Ravi at Rajghat, he halted and detached Khwaja Mirza Khan with his corps of 900 Mughalia troops armed with Jizairs across the river to dislodge the enemy from the garden. Khwaja Mirza accomplished the task after a long and stubborn fight.

Next day, the Afghans occupied a position near the Shah's camp on the side of the Shalamar,<sup>1</sup> and Muin crossed over to the city.

Raitan Singh Bhangu, the author of the *Prachin Panth Parkash*, gives at this stage, an interesting account of the skirmish that the Sikhs had with a party of the Afghans on the northern bank of the Ravi. On his arrival in the city from the governor's camp, Kaura Mal made over the defence of the Yaki Gate to the Sikhs. A few Sikhs under the command of Sukha Singh Mari Kambo crossed the Ravi and entered the bushes. Durrani commander (Jahan Khan or some one else) sent four troops of cavalry to attack them. The Sikhs had not come to fight; but even then Sukha Singh rallied his men and made a bold dash at the Afghan troopers. But it was impossible for them to stand against the vastly superior numbers of the enemy forces who pushed them back to the river. Sukha Singh under the wrong impression that the Shah himself was commanding the troops made desperate efforts to get at him. But the Shah was not there and Sukha Singh was killed in his unsuccessful efforts. The Sikhs then took to their boats and returned to the city. But to their dismay and disgust, they were received with fire from the city walls, apparently under some misunderstanding

1. *Tabmas Namah*, p. 13.

*Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* (i) 133.

whereupon a large number of them left for their *dera* in the Majha.<sup>1</sup>

Muin, with utmost alacrity formed an entrenchment outside the city. The war now entered on the stalemate stage. The Abdali could neither storm Lahore on account of his lack of artillery, nor drive Muin out of his trenches and Mannu too did not have sufficiently large mobile force to enable him to sally out and seek a decision with the Afghans in the open. The patrols on the two sides had frequent clashes. Ahmad everyday sent out strong detachments which systematically ravaged the country for forty miles on each side so that no lamp was lighted in any house for a distance of three marches and grain became exceedingly dear.<sup>2</sup>

The state of suspense continued for over a month and a half. No reinforcement reached the defender of Lahore. The Emperor repeatedly wrote personal notes to his Wazir (Safdar Jang) to conclude his expedition against Ahmad Khan Bangash and Sadullah Khan, son of Ali Muhammad Khan Rohilla and return to the capital but he took no action being more bent upon crushing his private foes and settling his own Subah of Oudh. The other nobles were too poor to afford any help. The criminal neglect of duty to the state at a time when a foreign enemy had already crossed the threshold and was threatening to take possession of an important portion of it can only be explained by the fact that a general degeneration of character had overtaken the Mughal nobles.

In Muin's own camp, divided counsels reigned. Bhikari Khan advocated peace at any cost; Kaura Mal pressed for battle, while Adina Beg and Muin Khan wavered between war and peace. As regards the strategy of warfare, difference of opinion was no less sharp. Adina Beg opined that since no reinforcement could be expected from Delhi, an action ought to be risked before the provisions failed as might be the case within a few days, if the blockade continued.

Kaura Mal argued that since the viceroy's troops were no match for the veterans of Ahmad Shah, an action might not be risked. So far as the issue of provisions was concerned, he added, the distress on account of them is no less in Durrani's camp than in their own. Kaura Mal hoped that in twenty days more, the hot weather would set in, when the northern troops of the Shah would

1. Rattan Singh Bhangu, *Prachin Panth Parkash*, pp. 407-11.

Gian Singh, *Panth Parkash*, pp. 693-99. According to Gian Singh, Sukha Singh was killed in the battle of Mahmud Buti.

2. Dr. Ganda Singh, *Ahmad Shah Abdali*, p. 109.

find the sun and wind intolerable in the plains, and hence would be compelled to retreat or to attack them in their lines to their own advantage. The advice of Kaura Mal was certainly the wisest; but Adina Beg's opinion was to the taste of the youthful viceroy who at once made up his mind to launch an attack.

On the morning of the 5th March, 1752, Muin launched an attack. Bhikari Khan, Mir Moman Khan and Khanjar Khan were given the command of the advance army. The left and right wings were placed under the commands of Adina Beg, Sayyad Jamil-ud-Din and Mohammad Khan. The rear was covered by Mehdi Ali Khan, Raja Behari Mal Bundela and Mir Aman Ullah Khan.

The Shah also arranged his forces in battle array. To oppose the Lahore advance army, he deputed Barkhurdar Khan, Diwan Begi and Abdus Samad Khatak. The left flank was placed under the command of Shah Wali Khan and other Durrani Sardars, while the rear was commanded by the Orak Zai chiefs, Muhammad Saeed Khan and Allayar Khan.

The battle was fought fiercely by both sides. In the initial stages, the Durrani fared better; but then; the Lahore forces pressed them hard. At the fall of night, fighting stopped and both the parties returned to their respective camps.

For ten days following this battle, Mir Mannu's men could find no trace of Shah's army. In the morning of March 6, 1752, Muin again issued forth from his camp to attack the Durrans. He selected an eminence, the site of an old brick-kiln, to the north-east of the Shalamar Garden for his position and fixed his guns there. Adina Beg Khan, Moman Khan, Khanjar Khan Kabuli and Mir Niamat Khan commanded the right wing while the left was led by Bhikari Khan etc. The centre was held by Mir Mannu himself and the rear was guarded by Mehdi Ali Khan, Raja Behari Mal Bundela and the hill chiefs of Jammu, Jasrota, Kangra and Haripur. Kaura Mal commanded the army that was detailed to march against Sardar Jahan Khan. The Shah, in the meantime, had moved down towards Lahore along the river bank and was encamped on the plains of the village of Mahmud Buti.

The Shah, on his part, also made full preparations. He, without losing a second, rushed a division of the army which captured the guns and entered the entrenchments. He then brought his camel swivels to the front and opened murderous fire on the enemy which continued upto afternoon. The Shah so conducted the operations of the day that simultaneously attacks were launched on all sides

of the enemy and it became impossible for him to concentrate on his defences. Observing some confusion in the enemy's army, the Shah ordered a division of his picked horsemen to deliver a forceful attack which forced Muin to seek shelter in his trenches.

At this critical juncture, on the advice of Adina Beg, Muin summoned Kaura Mal with a view to making a concerted attack on the Durranis. Kaura Mal had to obey the order, although he wanted to stick to his position against Sardar Jahan Khan.

Now Jamil-ud-Din Khan, Qaim Ali Khan, Yaqut Khan, Kaura Mal and five or six other Sardars launched an offensive on the Durranis. They were successful in pushing back some of the Durranis, but then a small incident turned the tide against the Indians and contributed considerably to the victory of the Shah. When the Indian Sardars were pushing forward, Kaura Mal's elephant happened to set its foot on a dilapidated grave which sank under its weight. This presented a favourable opportunity to Adina Beg, who bitten with jealousy was looking forward to the chance to strike a mortal blow to Kaura Mal. While Kaura Mal shifted himself to the *howdah* of Niamat Khan's elephant and was just taking a seat therein, Adina Beg instructed one of the Afghans of Kasur, Bayazid Khan by name, to 'put an end to the existence of Kaura Mal by a musket ball'.<sup>1</sup>

The Durranis, at this stage made a sudden rush and carried away the head of Kaura Mal. Adina Beg deserted its post and fled to the city.

The burden of the attack had then to be borne by Mannu and Bhikari Khan; but the Indians could not hold for long and soon their ranks were seized of panic. Ahmad Shah was victorious for the day. Mannu moved to Idgah with a view to making fresh plans in conjunction with Adina Beg. But Adina Beg had fled to the city much earlier for his own safety without thinking of his master. Suggestions were made to him to either retire to Delhi or to the hills; but Mannu was opposed to all such suggestions. It was ultimately decided to move to the village of Sarian, to the north-east of Lahore between Lopoke and Ajnala and from there to make an assault upon the Durranis. But on arriving at the gate of the city, he changed his mind and decided to battle till his last breath. He ordered the ingress of the city and the fort to be closed and

1. Ali-ud-Din, *Ibrat Namah*, p. 242.

Elliot and Dowson, Vol. viii, p. 168.

mounted his guns on the walls to resist the invader.<sup>1</sup>

As the day dawned, Ahmad Shah laid siege to the city and plundered its suburbs. At the same time, he sent Shah Wali Khan (Ahmad Shah Abdali's Wazir), Jahan Khan and Shah Ghulam Muhammad Pirzada and Mufti Abdullah Peshawari with a letter to Mannu, inviting him to a conference for negotiating peace.

The letter brought about a change in the mind of Mannu, who made up his mind to visit the Shah in person. He took a few of his trusted attendants<sup>2</sup> along with him and fearlessly accompanied the Durrani's envoys to his camp. A conversation, both interesting and meaningful, was held between Mannu and the Shah which is detailed as under :

Ahmad Shah : What would you (Mannu) had done to me if you had captured me ?

Mannu : I should have cut your head off and sent it to my master, the Emperor.

Ahmad Shah : Now that you have held on so long from making submission what should I do to you ?

Mannu : If you are a shopkeeper, sell me for a ransom; if you are a butcher, kill me; but if you are Padshah, then grant me your grace and pardon.

The conversation highly pleased Ahmad Shah Durrani who embraced Mannu, called him his son (Farzand Khan Bahadur) and gave him a robe of honour, an aigrette for the crest, and the very turban he was wearing.<sup>3</sup> On the request of Mannu, Abdali released his Punjab captives and did not allow his soldiers to plunder or maltreat the citizens. Presents were given to the Shah for a dinner to himself and his troops.

By the treaty concluded between Mir Mannu and Ahmad Shah, the following decisions were made :

- i) That the provinces of Lahore and Multan were to be considered as annexed to the Afghan Empire of Ahmad Shah Abdali;
- ii) That Muin-ul-Mulk was, as usual, to remain the governor of these provinces on behalf of the Shah;
- iii) That the administrative arrangements in these provinces

1. *Tarikh-i-Ali*, p. 225.

2. Bhikari Khan, Khwaja Murad Khan and Muhammad Taqi Khan, Darogha Darab Khan, Mir Ahmadi Khan and a Eunuch, Muhabat Khan.

3. J.N. Sarkar, *Fall of Mughal Empire*, p. 433.

were, in no way, to be disturbed. Only the surplus revenue was henceforth to be sent to Abdali and the final orders in the highest questions were to be taken from him.<sup>1</sup>

Mannu paid 30 lakhs of rupees—10 lakhs for the grant of their lives, 10 lakhs for the territories granted to him, and 10 lakhs for the peace of India. The treaty was confirmed by the Mughal Emperor (Ahmad Shah) on 1st April, 1752. According to Sarkar, "The terrified Emperor and his ministers at once agreed to the formal cession of the provinces of Lahore and Multan to the Abdali, or in actual effect to pay him 50 lakhs of rupees a year in lieu of their surplus revenue."

The Shah desired the coin to be struck and Khutba read in his name; but Mannu implored him not to do so on the ground that this step would introduce fresh complications which it would become difficult to solve at that stage and would bring him into disrepute. Ahmad Shah caught the points implied in the request and did not insist on the innovations.<sup>2</sup>

On 21st April, 1752, the Shah moved out of Lahore to march back to his country. To cement his relations with his Afghan Majesty, Mannu before the Shah's departure, offered the hand of his daughter Umda Begam on betrothal to his son, Prince Taimur.<sup>3</sup>

On his way back, he despatched a strong detachment under Abdullah Khan to re-establish his authority in Kashmir. The unpopular governor Abdul Qasim (who had usurped the governorship) did not put up any resistance.

The authority of Durrani was established. Ahmad Shah appointed Diwan Sukhjiwan Mal, the governor of Kashmir and Abdullah Khan as his deputy. Multan being a great trade centre and commanding a route linking Afghanistan with India was converted into an Afghan colony by implanting there Saddozai Afghans (Fellow-clan men of Ahmad Shah Abdali) through various means, such as the grant of land and high posts etc.

### **Importance of the Third Invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali**

Many far-reaching consequences stemmed from this invasion. The sovereignty of the Punjab up to Sirhind including the Subah

1. J.N. Sarkar, *Fall of Mughal Empire*, p. 434.

2. *Tahmas Namah*, p. 17.

Dr. Ganda Singh, *Ahmad Shah Abdali*, p. 121.

3. The marriage could not be solemnized. After the death of Mannu, she became a subject of political strife.



of Multan passed on to Ahmad Shah Durrani. Mannu, henceforth, the nominee of the Mughal emperor became the loyal servant of Ahmad Shah Abdali. The weakness of Ahmad Shah (the Mughal Emperor), the factional strifes of the Court, the selfish policy of Adina Beg came on the surface. The military frontier of the Mughal Empire was advanced to Sirhind with the result that it became difficult, rather impossible, for the Mughal authorities at Delhi to think of some military projects against Afghanistan people.

Moreover, it became easy for the Afghans to strike at Delhi, making Sirhind as their base. The Mughal Imperial authority suffered irreparable loss in terms of prestige, territory, resources and military power.

The treaty had its effect on the course of the Afghan-Mughal conflict. The active conflict was, no doubt, over, but the political sagacity demanded that the Imperial authority should remain weak and now the Afghan policy was directed to this end.

As a corollary of it, he encouraged the Afghans in the whole of Northern India to assert themselves. This inducted a new factor in the politics of the country. The Mughal Government, would henceforth, take special care while dealing with the Afghans in the country.

The economic condition of the Mughal empire and especially of the Punjab worsened. The devastation of 80 Kos of the territory around Lahore, the denuding of the personal treasury of Mannu and also of province of a large sum affected adversely the expenditure-policy of the government with the result that those industries whose fate was linked with the state expenditure suffered considerably.

The lot of the peasants was the worst of all. Not to speak of the sufferings which they underwent during the course of the invasion, they had lost the means including animals and wells to restart their work of cultivation. Under the circumstances, the commerce also suffered heavily.

The effect of this invasion on the Sikhs' struggle was at once deep and significant. Their struggle passed to the second phase. Henceforth, the Sikhs were concerned not so much with the Delhi emperor and his agents as with the Abdali Monarch and his representatives. The state of things was, however, further complicated by the ambitious designs of the adventurer Adina Beg Khan and the weak-kneed and inscrupulous policy of Imad-ul-Mulk who as Wazir, began to control the destinies of the empire from 1754.

This invasion is also significant in that it set new trends in the politics of the country. Here, it would not be out of place to remark that Safdar Jang, the Delhi Wazir, being jealous of Mir Mannu had not come to Mir Mannu's help against Abdali. In spite of the repeated orders of the Emperor, he continued the work of punishing the Zamindars of Oudh and Allahabad. He, thus, enabled Abdali to defeat and discredit his rival. When it was too late, he entered into collusive agreement with Malhar Rao Holkar and Jayappa Sindhia against Abdali (1752). According to this agreement, the Marathas were to defend the Emperor against foreign enemies and domestic rebels. The Emperor was to pay them Rs. thirty lakhs for driving Abdali out and twenty lakhs for suppressing the internal rebels. The emperor agreed to grant to the Peshwas the Chouth of the Punjab, Sindh, Sialkot, Pasrur, Gujrat, Aurangabad, Hissar and other regions.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Sikh Movement and Mir Mannu**

As it has been mentioned earlier, the Dal Khalsa was organised and declared to be a state. The leading Sikhs began to assert their rule over different parts of the Central Punjab. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Hari Singh, Karor Singh, Jhanda Singh and others with five to six thousand horsemen, established themselves in the Bari Doab. Bagh Singh Hallowalia, with his nephew Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia took possession of a large part of the Jullundur Doab. Charat Singh Sukarchakia spread his power over the Rachna Doab, with his headquarter at Gujranwala, where he built a fort. All adventurous people, and others, who were tired of Mughal misrule, began to flock under the banner of one or other of these Sardars.

These activities of the Sikhs, threatening the integrity of the Mughal rule, could not pass un-noticed by Mir Mannu, who shortly after assuming the charge, sent punitive expeditions against the Sikhs. The Sikhs, under pressure of these expeditions, evacuated Bari Doab and entered Jullundur Doab. Mir Mannu ordered Adina Beg to round them up in his territory. Adina Beg, as usual began to make conciliatory gestures whereupon Mir Mannu issued strict instructions to him to take immediate steps to curb the Sikhs. Adina, although reluctantly, led an expedition against the Sikhs. In an engagement that followed, both the parties suffered heavily—the

---

1. Sinha, N.K., *Part of the Sikh Power*, p. 17.

Sikhs alone leaving 600 dead on the field of the battle. This battle probably took place in June 1748.<sup>1</sup>

After the rainy season the Sikhs gathered in large numbers to celebrate the Diwali festival at Amritsar. No doubt, it was a risky affair, yet the Sikhs must celebrate because the celebration of Diwali and Baisakhi festivals at Hari Mandir had become an article of faith with them.

Mir Mannu thought that he could deliver a heavy blow at them. He marched with a force on the fort of Ram Rauni where nearly 500 Sikhs had taken shelter while the rest had hidden themselves in the bushes near Ram Sar. He also summoned Adina Beg to help him.

The Sikhs put up a stout resistance. The enemy's forces decided to blow up Ram Rauni by filling gun powder in the underground tunnels. But the Sikhs dug a deep moat, took positions in it and thus prevented the progress of the tunnel being made by the enemy forces. After some time there was great scarcity of food and fodder and the besieged were obliged to resort to various expedients to replenish their resources.

The Sikh chroniclers have told of Jai Singh Kanhaiya's feats how he would jump over the walls and wresting provisions from the commissariat shops and throwing them in and how he would climb back into the fort. In their extreme distress, the besieged wrote to Jassa Singh Thoka (carpenter) who was in the service of Adina Beg Khan, that he, being on the side of the Muslims, was the cause of their ruin and if he did not come that day to their help, he would never be allowed to be re-admitted into their church. Jassa Singh Thoka in response to the appeal of his brethren deserted Adina Beg and entered the fort in the night.<sup>2</sup> At This juncture, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia sent a message to Diwan Kaura Mal to the effect that "the garrison can secure relief only through your efforts. If you exert, three hundred lives can be saved."

Kaura Mal who had sympathy for the Sikhs and sharp judgement of the political affairs had a talk with Mir Mannu. He argued that the Sikhs caused confusion and disorder. If they were provided with means of subsistence, they would not create

---

1. Sohan Lal, *Umdat-ut-Twarikh*, Vol. I, pp. 127, 128.

Bakhat Mal, *Khalsa Nama*, p. 67.

2. According to *Prachin Panth Parkash*, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia had been ex-communicated from the Khalsa brotherhood for killing his daughter.

disturbances. Adina Beg, however, had his own view. He did not want to relent and remarked, "Goodness to the evildoers is doing evil to the good people." Mir Mannu approved of the suggestion of Kaura Mal and in support of his stand said, "It is better to stitch the mouth of a dog with morsels." In fact, the political expediency demanded such an action. The impending danger of Ahmad Shah Durrani's invasion and the intransigent attitude of the Delhi Wazir prompted him to wind up his campaign against the Sikhs. It was in this very context that Kaura Mal's suggestion was given due consideration.

Mir Mannu granted the Sikhs one-fourth of the revenue of the Parganah of Patti, released the revenue of a dozen villages of Guru ka Chak<sup>1</sup> and came back to Lahore. In this way the siege of Ram Rauni was lifted (Maghar 1805 Bk./November 1748). Kaura Mal took a number of the Sikhs into his pay and showed them indulgence. Being a believer of the Guru, he paid the Sikhs a fine of Rs. 5 per day for smoking.<sup>2</sup> The Sikhs took to a peaceful life for some time, and waited for some opportunity to rise and strike to gain their objective.

The goodwill created among the Sikhs softened the Sikhs at least for some time, towards the government. In September/October, 1749, when Mir Mannu finally made up his mind to deal with Shah Nawaz Khan, he sent a campaign under the overall command of Diwan Kaura Mal. The odds against the Mir Mannu's forces were very heavy because Baloches of South West, Bahawalpur, Markotia, and the Sials had joined hands with Shah Nawaz Khan.

Naturally under such circumstances, Kaura Mal's forces' advance was checked much to the chagrin in of Mir Mannu. No pitched battle could be staked because of the shortage of men and material at the disposal of the Diwan.

At this critical juncture, Diwan Kaura Mal sought the help of the Sikhs whom he had done a good turn when they were hard pressed in the fort of Ram Rauni. They readily agreed and their supreme leader, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia at the head of ten thousand Sikhs moved towards Multan.

1. Khushwaqt Rai, *Twarikh-i-Sikhan*, pp. 76-78.

Sohan Lal, *Umdat-ut-Twarikh*, first edition, p. 129.

Rattan Singh Bhangu, *Prachin Panth Parkash*, p. 401.

2. Do, pp. 400-04.

Everyday Diwan Kaura Mal would offer sweet cold drinks (Shardai) which the Sikhs consumed to their hearts's content. They were so pleased with him that they began to address him as Mitha Mal (Mr. Sweet).

A big battle was fought near the village of Daurana Langana just on the outskirts of Multan. Zahad Khan and his son Shuja Khan launched a vigorous attack on Diwan Kaura Mal's forces. At the same time, a battalion under the command of Khwaja Shah, who was in the pay of Shah Nawaz Khan, advanced towards Diwan Kaura Mal. Victory for Shah Nawaz appeared imminent—so much so that the Khwaja Shah boasted of presenting the Diwan in iron chains. But providence willed otherwise. The Khalsa under the direction of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia trained their guns at the forces of Khwaja Shah. In self-defence, when the Khwaja turned back, he was struck with fatal bullet. Bhim Singh chopped the head of Shah Nawaz Khan the moment he fell down his horse in the confusion. For showing this exemplary valour, Bhim Singh was awarded a couple of Karaahs (iron bracelets), arms, shields and a horse.

Shah Nawaz's death spread consternation among his soldiers and they took to their heels. The Khalsa soldiers chased them for some time and killed quite a large number of them in the process. From among the associates of Diwan Kaura Mal, Abdul Aziz Khan and Mirza Asmat Beg Khan were killed. Zahad Khan could not withstand the shock of Shah Nawaz's death and took poison. The dead body of Shah Nawaz Khan was buried in a befitting manner. Diwan Kaura Mal was duly admired by Mir Mannu who conferred on him the title of Maharaja Bahadur. He also appointed him the governor of Multan and Thatta.

As a mark of his joy Diwan Kaura Mal made an offering of Rs. 1000 for cleansing Amritsar Sarovar (the tank of Immortality) which had been filled with earth by Diwan Lakhpat Rai in Yahiya Khan's time. On the occasion of Diwali of 1749 the amount was used for the specified purpose by the Sikhs congregation who also contributed in terms of labour and cash to accomplish the sacred task. The Darbar Sahib was illuminated on the occasion after several years. Diwan Kaura Mal raised Gurdwara on the spot where Guru Nanak played in his childhood at the cost of three lakhs. In commemoration of these services, a portrait of Maharaja Kaura Mal Bahadur riding an

elephant accompanied by a contingent each of infantry and cavalry was drawn on an inner wall of the Gurdwara. It was a historical memorial which disappeared in 1908 when the old building was demolished.<sup>1</sup>

The conciliatory policy of Diwan Kaura Mal brought in a short period of respite in the history of the Sikhs. The government's attitude towards the Sikhs underwent a change for the better. The Sikh peasantry in the villages was no longer harassed by them. During the period of peace which extended nearly over a year, the Sikh ranks were further strengthened since the peasantry as well as the so-called menials were attracted towards them for their ideology, recognising no caste-system or other man-made social barriers and committed to raising non-exploitative society on the basis of equality and non-discrimination.

The Sikh leadership at this point of time could not be lulled to sleep for a long time. They were clear about their objectives and the designs of the government under Mir Mannu. They did take to a peaceful life for some time, but they were always in wait for the right type opportunity to rise and strike to gain their objective.

The much sought for opportunity came in December 1749 when Ahmad Shah Abdali entered the Punjab for the second time. In large numbers, they gathered at Amritsar and decided to attack Lahore. What prompted them to do so was not difficult to find. They clearly understood, that the award of 'Jagir' to them did not epitomise Mannu's genuine desire to reconcile them; at best, it was a bait thrown to them to lull them to sleep at least during the period of emergency caused by Durrani's invasion. This being so, they were quick to make most of the time which could assure them some gain. Therefore when they found that Mir Mannu along with his important nobles had gone to stem the invader near Chenab, they attacked Lahore and burnt its outer portion to ashes. Nawab Kapur Singh then entered the town and took his seat on the platform of the Korwali, apparently to get a portion of the revenues of the city. Ivaz Khan the acting deputy of Muin came with his troops to fight whereupon Kapur Singh left the place and retired out of the city.<sup>2</sup>

1. Ram Jas, *Twarikh-i-Riast Kapurthala*, pp. 143-44.

2. Khushwaqt Rai, *Twarikh-i-Sikhan*, p. 82.



After Ahmad Shah left the Punjab, Mir Mannu attended to the Sikh problem. He felt convinced, and rightly so, that the Sikhs would not rest contented with the allowances of the Jagir granted to them and they were only biding their time to recoup their strength for creating fresh troubles in the province. Accordingly, he set the government machinery, both military and civil, once again in motion and revived the old orders to the district and village officials for the arrest of the Sikhs. The people were forbidden under penalty of death to offer shelter to them.<sup>1</sup>

He ordered his Jizarchis to pursue the Sikhs and slay them wherever they were found. The eye-witness Miskin in his *Tazkira* on folios 68-69 makes the following observation, "Muin appointed most of them (Jiazrchis) to the task of chastising the Sikhs. They ran after these wretches upto 80 Kms in a day and slew them wherever they stood up to oppose them. Everybody who brought Sikh head to Muin received a reward of Rs. 10/- per head. Anybody who brought a horse belonging to a Sikh could keep it as its own. Whosoever lost his own horse by chance in the fight (with the Sikhs) got another in its place from the government stable." Muin thus succeeded in executing thousands of the Sikhs but he could not curb their spirit.

Muin Khan was despatched (October 1751) to chastise the Sikhs who were creating disturbances in the close neighbourhood of Lahore. When they marched towards the hills for safety, Mir Amanullah Khan, faujdar of Eminabad was ordered to join Momin Khan who was given the task of rooting out this sect with the help of the Zamindars of the sub-mountain tracts.<sup>2</sup>

The oppression was conducted on such a scale that the Sikhs were forced to seek shelter in their old resorts in the lower Himalayan spurs, the thick forests of central and eastern Punjab and the deserts of Malwa and Bikaner. But the Sikhs were unmindful of these persecutions, always optimistic about the future.

The government had to suspend his policy of the persecution of the Sikhs, as it was called upon to face a graver danger from across the mountains—another invasion of Ahmad Shah Durrani. The Punjab had to suffer the agonies of the invasion for four months

1. Dr. H.R. Gupta, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol. I, p. 70.

2. Dr. H.R. Gupta, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol. I, p. 71.

(December 1751 to March 1752). This period was God-sent for the Sikhs. They renewed their depredations, this time over a comparatively wider area. They sacked the Bari Doab and moved on to the Jullundur Doab which lay unprotected as Adina Beg Khan was in Lahore fighting on the side of Mannu. They crossed the Sutlej and extended their depredations as far as Thanesar and retired towards Hissar.<sup>1</sup>

A part of Dal Khalsa under Charat Singh and Gurbakhsh Singh penetrated in the west into the Rachna and Chaj Doab and committed desolation in that part of the country. Besides acquiring a lot of rich booty, the Sikhs gained large number of fresh recruits.

After the treaty of peace with Ahmad Shah abdali (1752) the political situation underwent a considerable change. Henceforth, the Sikhs would have to struggle against the Afghans for the sovereignty of the Punjab instead of the Mughals who had ceded Punjab to the Afghans. Mir Mannu was no longer the nominee of Delhi Emperor and functioned as a nominee of Ahmad Shah Durrani. The death of Kaura Mal had snapped the only link between Mir Mannu and Sikh Misaldars. The Sikhs had spread out all over the Punjab. Very recently in July-August 1752, they joined with Rajas of Mandi and Katoch and fought a pitched battle with a steward of Muin who had gone to eastern hills to collect revenue. The steward lost his life and the Mughal forces had to leave the field in humiliation. Sardar Jassa Singh returned to Amritsar with gifts from the Rajas.<sup>2</sup>

When Mir Mannu recovered from shock of the Afghan visitation, he discovered that most of his domains were in the hands of the Sikhs. Adina Beg, more concerned for his territory, was even more affected by the Sikh incursions.

Mannu had no alternative except taking strong measures against the Sikhs and this time he spared no pains to smash the Sikhs out of their existence. He despatched Sadiq Beg Khan with Adina Beg to punish the Sikhs in the Jullundur Doab where they had returned from Hissar. In February 1753, when a great concourse of the Sikhs had gathered at Makhawal, also called Anandpur, to

1. An entry in *Tarikh-i-Ahmad Shahi* on folio 132 dated 15th December 1751 runs as follows, "In these days the Sikhs the worshippers of Nanak, came from the Lahore side stayed in Sirhind for some time, plundering and ravaging the towns of that district and then advanced towards Jind, Kangar, Khan Baluch, the governor of Hissar and Sonepat fought and killed many villagers of the sect. Then they fled away towards Hissar.
2. Griffin, *Rajas of the Punjab*, p. 501.

celebrate Diwali, Adina Beg and Sadiq Beg fell on them unawares and put many of them to death. In the confusion and melee a bullet struck Charat Singh Sukarchakia causing a deep wound from which he recovered after some time.<sup>1</sup> The slaughter, however, had no deterring effect upon them, as they were accustomed to such assaults. It only strengthened their resolve to rid the country of the enemy, and in a few days they were up to plunder again in small parties. They finally dispersed in all directions. According to Browne, "the Sikhs could have been crushed, had Adina Beg not entered into secret understanding with them by which, though their excursions were limited, they enjoyed a security to which they had been unaccustomed and from which they gathered strength and resources for future efforts."<sup>2</sup>

Mannu, however, did not give up the pursuit of the Sikhs. After the return of Adina Beg Khan, another force under Momin Khan was despatched in the direction of Lakhi Jungle where the Sikhs were reported to have taken shelter. The Muslim force was very much harassed, and consequently, it was called back. A fresh expedition, under Hussain Khan, was despatched. The officer proved to be too cunning for the Sikhs and succeeded in provoking them to open fight rather than resorting to their guerrilla tactics. The Sikhs were defeated and made to leave the field.<sup>3</sup>

The Sikhs fled to the northern parts of the Bari Doab where they indiscriminately plundered the unguarded towns.

The governor was piqued and now proceeded in person. Once, while encamped at Batala, he heard that a band of Sikhs was causing trouble in the neighbourhood by blocking traffic and disturbing the population. By his orders Sayyad Jamil-ud-Din Khan and Bakhshi Ghazi Beg Khan moved out against them. These officers marched to the scene, fought the Sikhs and put them to flight. Nine hundred of the Sikh infantry threw themselves into the small fort of Ram Rauni. After a sharp struggle, all of them

1. Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs*, p. 92.

Brown *op. cit.*, p. 17.

2. Brown Major, *History of the Origin and Progress of the Sikhs in India Tracts*.

Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs*, p. 92.

Bakhat Mal, *Khalsa Nama*, pp. 71-72.

3. Rattan Singh, *Prachin Panth Parkash*, pp. 307-10.

According to Gian Singh, the fight took place in the bet (Island) of the Sutlej near Kot Buddha Gaon (*Panth Prakash*, pp. 701-05).

were killed.<sup>1</sup>

Mir Mannu did not feel satisfied with all this; he set his camp near the bank of the Ravi about 7 Kos from the city and directed the operation against the Sikhs. Moving columns, under Khwaja Mirza, fanned out in all directions to suppress the Sikhs; the Khwaja would everyday comb the country for about thirty miles, and wherever he got a clue of the Sikhs, he would fall upon them and kill them. Those who brought Sikhs alive or their severed heads or even their horses were rewarded. The Sikhs thus captured were hammered to death with wooden clubs. The same fate was reserved for those who were sent occasionally in batches of 40 or 50 by Adina Beg from Jullundur Doab.<sup>2</sup>

To strike still more terror, Mannu ordered his troops to seize the women and children of the Sikhs. Consequently the soldiers secured a large number of such captives, and brought before Mannu. He tortured them to force them to abandon their religion; but, as was expected, they bore all atrocities including the cutting up of their children before their eyes, and did not yield. According to George Thomas, "Instances indeed have not infrequently occurred, in which they (Sikh women) have actually taken up arms to defend their habitations, from the desultory attacks of the enemy, and throughout the contest behaved themselves with an intrepidity of spirit, highly praiseworthy."<sup>3</sup> These women were imprisoned in the underground cellars where each of them was assigned the hard labour of grinding one maund and a quarter of grains every day. For doing this job each of them got only ¼th of a loaf. Cruel soldiers would many a time cut their small children into pieces right under their nose.

The governor himself, at times, rode out for the hunt of the Sikhs and brought in a large bag of them. Hundreds were put to death at the Nakhas outside the Delhi gate of Lahore, and wells were filled with their heads. But these proceedings seem to have no effect upon the Sikhs, as it would appear from the following Panjabi doggerel :

Mannu is our sickle,  
We the fodder for him to mow,

1. Tahmas Khan Misikin, *Tazkira-i-Tabmas*, 1780 MS, p. 81.

Sarkar, J.N., *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Vol I, p. 426.

2. *Tabmas Nama*, p. 19; Nur Ahmad Chisti, *Taqiqat-i-Chisti*, Lahore, 1906, pp. 82 III 648, 694 (Urdu).

3. George Thomas, *Military Memoirs of Mr. George Thomas*, p. 75.

The more he reaps, the more we grow.<sup>1</sup>

The fighting and reprisals went on until the death of Mir Mannu. Mannu rode out from his camp Tilakpur for the hunt of the Sikhs. His horse skied and threw him off his seat. While falling, he got his foot caught in the stirrup, and was dragged along the ground for some distance. In this way, the hunter in the midst of his game was brought down by the mightier hunter, Death, on November 4, 1753.<sup>2</sup>

Just when he expired, a band of Sikhs hiding in some sugarcane fields in the vicinity of Lahore, reached the horse market at Lahore, liberated the women and children doing excruciating labour of grinding 1¼ maunds of grain daily in underground prison cellars. They were taken away by them on their horse-backs.

The reign of terror unleashed by Mannu could not strike fear into the hearts of the Sikhs rather it steeled their determination still more and they developed such qualities that were sure to stand them in good stead, even against the heaviest of odds. The observation is amply vouchsafed by G.R.C. William in *Calcutta Review-1875*. He says, 'The Sikh Jawans' endurance and rapidity of movement were quite commensurate with their capacity, enabling them to baffle if not defy, superior numbers.... At a pinch, he could march some twenty or thirty miles a day on no better fare than a little parched gram washed down with pure cold water. A tent he despised, baggage in the military sense of the word he had none..... Besides his weapons, his whole kit consisted of horse-gear, a few of the simplest cooking utensils, and two blankets one for himself and other for his faithful steed.... Although his tactics mainly resolved themselves into a prolonged series of skirmishes conducted somewhat after the Parthian fashion, yet in the strife of men contending hand to hand he was terrible, though helpless against good artillery. In the words of Sohan Lal, "During the campaigns of Muin's officers against the Sikhs, the Hindu peasants were also persecuted on many allegations such as supplying food to the Sikh outlaws, giving them

---

1. Aliuddin, *Ibrat Nama*, iii a.

2. Miskin, who was serving Muin as his personal attendant, gives interesting details about his master's tragic end. He was buried in the mansion of Abdul Rahim Khan son-in-law of Abdus Samad Khan. The Sikhs in the reign of Sher Singh, son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh dismantled the building dug out the remains of Muin and scattered them. (*Lahore Gazetteer*, Khushwaqt Rai, op. cit., p. 88).

shelter and avoiding disclosure of their whereabouts. Therefore daily additions to the number of the Sikhs took place openly at every place. Some of the members of Zamindar families under tyrannical oppression of the Muslim officers everyday left their homes, took Pahul and received free supply of food, clothing, arms and horses from the Sardars.<sup>11</sup>

According to Karam Singh historian, 'the massacre of the Sikhs during Muin-ul-Mulk was the seventh in digital order. The first massacre occurred from 1710 through 1712. From 1715 to 1719, the second massacre took place during the reign of Ferrukh Siyar and Abdus Samad Khan. The third massacre was the handiwork of Nawab Zakariya Khan from 1726 to 1735. The fourth massacre also occurred during his viceroyalty from 1739 to 1745. The fifth massacre was ordered by Yahiya Khan from 1745-1746. The Sixth and seventh massacres were ordered by Mir Mannu in 1748 and from March 1752 through November, 1753 respectively.'

The seventh massacre was the most horrible. In the first massacres only those Sikhs were arrested, tortured and killed who fought directly against the government or served food and supplied other provisions to the Sikhs spending their days in privations in jungles or in their hideouts.

In the seventh massacre carried out under the orders of Mir Mannu, the Sikhs were arrested and killed indiscriminately, even old men, infants and innocent women were not spared.

Ali-ud-Din Mufti writes in his book *Ibratnama* that 'Nawab Muin-ul-Mulk (Mir Mannu) tried his best to destroy the Sikh community root and branch. Hundreds of the Sikhs were killed and the wells were filled with their heads and their dead bodies.' But they regarded all these privations, atrocities and ordeals as a sort of divine gift which was sure to lead to their prosperity and felicity. Their morale remained as high as ever. Even under the worst stresses, they were never nervous and their determination remained rock-like. They were ever ready to redress the grievances of the people whenever a complaint against some official was lodged with them. The common danger and strong religious feelings kept them under/in discipline and made every Sikh obey his leader in order to work for the cause of the Panth.

Their organisation Dal Khalsa stood them in good stead. It not only led the expeditions against the government, but also it

1. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, I, p. 130.



functioned as a government of the Sikhs, albeit mobile. The Sikhs started calling 'Khalsa Jeo'. Besides, this organisation through its high conduct and commitment to Sikh ideals projected Sikh ideology in operation, with the result that many a people especially the oppressed/suppressed segment of them, was attracted towards Sikhism and felt pleasure coupled with sense of liberation by entering into its fold. The contemporary and semi-contemporary sources disclose that peasantry which had grown restless and discontented because of heavy exactions and ill-treatment of the government officials, preferred the adoption of Sikhism in order to ameliorate their condition as also to breath freely. The author of *Siyar-ul-Mutakbrin* writes, "Where the villagers underwent oppression, they grew hair, shouted Akal, Akal, took the Pahul and converted themselves to the Sikh Religion and in this way the number of the Dal Khalsa, began to increase by leaps and bounds."

With the death of Mannu ended yet another attempt to crush the Sikh power of the Khalsa, failed.

Mir Mannu's death left Punjab in a state of lawlessness. His failure was, as in the case of Zakariya Khan, due to repeated foreign invasions, Sikhs' resourcefulness and the utter incapability of the administration to take cognizance of the grievances and difficulties of the people, as also their aspirations. Henceforth for a period of three years, unbounded confusion and anarchy prevailed in the country. This short period of three years saw as many as nine short-lived successions to the Subedari of this frontier province.

The Delhi Government engrossed in factional strife utterly failed in taking care of the Punjab affairs while the Durrani embroiled too much in the affairs across the frontier of the Punjab could do nothing except providing occasional military assistance to the Lahore subedars. The Sikhs, however, took full advantage of the opportunity and crossed many mile-stones on the road to their objective of liberating the land alike from the hegemony of the Afghans and the rule of the Mughals, and to establish their own rule. According to a rough estimate, Muin destroyed not less than 30000 Sikhs.<sup>1</sup>

---

1. Gupta, H.R., *Evolution of Sikh Confederacy*, p. 116.

## Chapter 6

# MUGHLANI BEGAM

When the Emperor in Delhi received the news of the death of Mir Mannu, he appointed his own son, Prince Mahmud, a three years old child as the governor, and the son of Mir Mannu, named Muhammad Amin Khan, only two years old as the lieutenant governor of the Lahore. He appointed the widow of Mir Mannu, Murad Begam, popularly known as Mughlani Begam as the regent of the two children. These nominees, however, enjoyed a very short tenure of only five days in their new offices.

There had been a shuffling in the ministership at Delhi a few days earlier. Intazam-ud-Daula, Khan-i-Khana, the eldest son of Minister Qamar-ud-Din, had replaced Safdar Jang as the Minister in Delhi in March 1753. The new minister, the Khan-i-Khana did not approve of the Lahore appointments, in which changes were made once again. The minister Khan-i-Khana was nominated as the governor of Lahore on the 17th of November 1753 and Momin Khan as his Lieutenant Governor.

Neither Murad Begam nor Momin Khan was happy with the appointments. They were fully aware that the Punjab since 1752 formed a part of the Durrani Empire and hence its Subedar drew his real power not from the Delhi Emperor but from the king of Afghanistan. Both of them, therefore, opened negotiations with Ahmad Shah Abdali and in January 1754 received royal order from Ahmad Shah Abdali appointing Muhammad Amin Khan, the son of Mir Mannu, as the Governor and, Momin Khan as his lieutenant, and Murad Begam as the regent. Soon after, i.e. to say in early May 1754, Amin Khan died and Murad Begam established herself squarely in the seat of the provincial government.

Bhikari Khan (Roshan-ud-Daula Rustam Jang) rejected this change and defied the new order from within his own house. He was the potent enemy, as he was the dearest friend and most trusted factotum of Muin and the centre of all affairs in the province

in his time.<sup>1</sup> But Murad Begam very cleverly won over other Turkish nobles and succeeded in imprisoning Bhikari Khan.

No sooner did she gain success in her project, than she began to betray the frailty of her sex.<sup>2</sup> She rarely attended the problems of administration and of the people. All contemporary evidence shows that she had thrown to the winds all modesty and became notorious for her profligacy and voluptuousness; her intimacy with Bakhshi Gazi Beg Khan and Tehmasap Khan Miskin, a slave youth of her household, was an open secret.

In May 1754, Delhi politics saw another convulsion. Intizam-ud-Daula, Khan-i-Khana was replaced by Gazi-ud-Din Imad-ul-Mulk, the grandson of Asaf Jah Nizam-ul-Mulk as the minister. He shut Emperor Ahmad Shah behind the bars on June 2, 1754 and notched his eyes out. He placed Prince Aziz-ud-Din, an old man of fifty-five, the grandson of Emperor Bahadur Shah and the son of Muaz-ud-Din, on the throne. The new king adopted the title of Alamgir the Second. He appointed Momin Khan as the governor of Lahore on October 25, 1754. Murad Begam with her characteristic arrogance paid little heed to this new arrangement and the order of the appointment of Momin Khan could not be put into effect.

Begam's rule was an utter failure, as it was bound to be because of the inefficiency and incapacity of the Begam to control the affairs of the administration particularly when it was faced with very serious problems of suppressing associations of the refractory people like those of the Sikhs. Begam depended upon eunuchs for counsel and for the conduct of the administration. Eunuchs were the medium of communication between the nobles and Begam. This being so, the eunuchs gained undue importance and to this extent that Begam's rule, to all intents and purposes, became 'Eunuchs' Rule'. The Diwan, Bakhshi and other government officials waited in the portico (deori) of the palace of Begam and received her orders through Mian Khush-Faham, Mian Arjmund and Mian Mahabhat. Matter became still worse when these Eunuchs constantly quarrelled among themselves, and being men of average ability were never in a position to give sober opinion to the Begam.

The Turkish nobility who belonged to the same stock in

1. *Tarikh-i-Ahmad Shahi*, pp. 282-83.

Sarkar, J.N., *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Vol. I.

2. Miskin, *Tazkira-i-Tabmas*, pp. 94-96.

central Asia as the Begam's father and husband, felt disgusted with them and one of them, Qasim Khan, raised standard of revolt against Begam with the specific purpose of establishing himself as the governor of the Punjab. Qasim Khan who had been enlisted as the soldier under Muin (Mannu) had risen to the position of Jamadar. He had helped Begám against Bhikari Khan who, in appreciation of his services, appointed him as faujdar of Patti parganah in Lahore district. He was also provided with some pieces of cannon, 30 Jizairchis who were Badakhshanis and had just arrived in the Punjab to seek their fortune, 100 Turki cavalry, a few thousand horse and foot, and several thousand rupees in cash.

On his way to Lahore, Qasim Khan was worsted by the Sikhs in a chance fight with them in which three hundred Badakhshani soldiers of his were killed. The historian Miskin who took part in this battle also saw many other dead bodies lying on both sides of the road. Thus trounced by the Sikhs, Qasim Khan formed a very high opinion of their fighting strength and thought of making friends with them. With their help, he hoped to make himself master of Lahore and then advance on Delhi itself. With a view of winning over a band of 8,000 Sikh soldiers, he gave them arms and ammunition with several thousand rupees. This depleted his treasury and he was unable to pay even his own troops, with the result that when he encamped near Shah Balawal, his own troops became unruly and dragged him to the Begam who confined him within her palace enclosure and kept him under strict guard<sup>1</sup> (March 1754). Even the revolt of Qasim Khan did not open the eyes of Begam. She went on as usual. In December 1754 the Mughal courtiers decided that as a fissure had appeared in the family honour of the late Nawab, the best course for them was to entrust Khwaja Mirza Khan, the Faujdar of Eminabad, with the administration of the province.

The Khwaja took possession of Lahore, confined the Begam in her brother's house and assumed the vicerealty of the Punjab.

Mughlani Begam secretly sent her uncle, Khwaja Abdullah Khan to Ahmad Shah Abdali to seek his protection. The Durrani Monarch sent 10,000 soldier cavalry and infantry in April 1755. Khwaja Mirza Khan who had opposed Mughlani Begam was imprisoned. Lahore was plundered by the Durrani soldiers and Mughlani Begam was left as the Subedar with Abdullah as her

1. Miskin, *Tazkira-i-Tabmas*, pp. 94-96.

deputy. Immediately after this, Mughlani got hold of Bhikari Khan who had been set free by Khwaja Mirza Khan and put him to death and his corpse was thrown into a ditch outside the town.<sup>1</sup>

Soon Mughlani Begam and Khwaja Abdullah quarrelled and the latter usurped all authority. Abdullah's rule was tyrannical. His most pressing need was that of money, and for it he left no kind of oppression untapped. "Closing the gates of the city, he plundered much from the inhabitants of Lahore, both Hindu and Muslim, on the plea of their having been associates of Bhikari Khan and slain many people. Vast numbers were ruined. Grain and other stuffs became very dear."<sup>2</sup>

The disturbed condition of Lahore prompted Adina Beg, the Faujdar of Jullundur, to march upon Lahore in September 1755. Khwaja Abdullah was driven from there and Sadiq Beg the lieutenant of Adina Beg was made the Governor. Mughlani Begam, thereupon, sent her representative to Abdali and sought his help for herself. Abdali ordered his general, Jahan Khan, to attack Lahore, but before Jahan Khan reached Lahore, Sadiq Beg retreated to Sirhind. Jahan Khan re-appointed Mughlani Begam as the Governor of Lahore and Khwaja Abdullah her lieutenant in December 1755.

As soon as the Durrani army left the Punjab, Adina Beg once again made preparations to attack Lahore. Mughlani Begam's daughter, Umda Begam, was the fiancee of Gazi-ud-Din, the Wazir in Delhi. Depending upon this close relationship, Mughlani Begam called upon the Wazir to come to her aid who at once set out with an army of ten thousand men for the Punjab.

Imad-ul-Mulk reached Sirhind on the 7th February, 1756. In the meantime, Adina Beg Khan, Faujdar of the Jullundur Doab under the government of Lahore, had made himself an independent power by raising a vast army including many Sikhs, with a strong park of artillery and swivel guns. After defeating Qutb Shah, the usurper of the Sirhind district, in a battle of Ropar (11th April, 1755), he had occupied Sirhind and the country upto Thanesar. The Wazir was glad to leave him in undisturbed administration of the country as he realised that only the strong

1. It is said that Mughlani Begam wanted to start love affair with Bhikari Khan. Bhikari, however rejected the offer for which the jilted woman saw him murdered.

2. *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Vol. II, p. 58, by J.N. Sarkar.

arm of Adina Beg could keep order in that tract. And now, at the beginning of 1756, while the Wazir was marching on Lahore, Adina wrote to him not to advance beyond Sirhind, but to send only a small party of his followers whom Adina would strengthen with 10,000 troopers of his own under Sadiq Beg Khan and help to capture Lahore by stratagem. The force reached Lahore by rapid marches, rode through the city in full military pomp to the Begam's residence (her mother's house) and next paid a visit of courtesy to Abdullah who, however, guessed out their object and at nightfall fled away to Jammu hills, abandoning the city (middle of January 1756). Next morning Mughlani Begam, beating her kettledrums, rode in triumph through the city, re-occupied her official residence, and took up the government of the province once more. After a month, having completed preparation, Mughlani Begam sent her daughter with an escort of 3,000 troopers and dowry and presents worthy of high ranks, to Imad's camp near Sirhind, where she arrived on the 4th March 1756.

Mughlani Begam's triumph, however, was short-lived. Imad could not tolerate her doings. "She was after all a Muslim woman, but used to do the work of a provincial governor after the manner of males before the public gaze. This part of virago that she played, quite apart from the stories about her loss of character, was felt as a personal disgrace by Imad because she was his mother's brother's wife and also his prospective mother-in-law. His family honour demanded that she should be removed from Lahore where she was enjoying unbridled liberty of action. A more sordid motive is said by some writers to have mingled with his feeling, namely greed for the hoarded wealth of her late husband.

So Imad sent Sayyad Jamil-ud-Din Khan with 10000 horse men and ten eunuchs to kidnap her. The Sayyad did the job and sent Mughlani Begam to the Wazir's camp at Machhiwara where she reached on the 28th March. Mughlani Begam was then taken to Delhi by Imad. Mir Momin, a leading nobleman and a relative of Mir Mannu was appointed subedar with Sayyad Jamil-ud-Din as his deputy and de-facto governor. The Sayyad was an honest god-fearing and experienced man; he administered the province justly, in strict accordance with the Islamic Canon law, punished offenders without fear or favour, and tried to maintain peace as far as he could. He sought to lower the unfairly enhanced price of grain by publicly flogging the headmen of the markets, and



led some expeditions against the Sikhs whom he defeated after severe fighting.

His rule too did not last more than six months. Khwaja Abdullah who had fled away before Adina's troops, went to Qandhar and brought a strong Afghan force under Abdali's general Jangbaz Khan, by promising to recover the Punjab from the hands of the Delhi Government's agents and restore it to the Abdali. With him came Khwaja Mirza and other Turki captains of Muin who had so long been held captives in Qandhar.

Strengthened by a force of Afghans of Peshawar under Abdus Samad Khan, the detachment arrived near Lahore. Sayyad Jamil-ud-Din appealed to Adina Beg for reinforcement but Adina Beg advised him to retreat to the Jullundur Doab and Jamil-ud-Din hurriedly left Lahore to join Adina there. Khwaja Abdullah was again installed in authority at Lahore by Durrani arms on 4th October to 25th November, 1756 with Khwaja Mirza Khan as his lieutenant. His Afghan allies roamed through the city, plundering whatever they could lay their hands on, without any check.

The story narrated in the foregoing paragraphs is a sickening tale of anarchy and confusion. Within the short space of three years (November 1753—October 1756), nine changes had taken place in the office of the governor, and the administration was gradually breaking up. Multan was under a separate Subedar directly responsible to the Durrani. Jullundur and Sirhind were under Adina Beg Khan, who did not care to recognise the authority of Lahore governor. The four Mahals of Sialkot, Pasrur, Multan and Aurangabad were ruled over by Rustam Khan, the nominee of Ahmad Shah Abdali. The authority of Lahore governor was confined only to the area in the neighbourhood of Lahore, the chief places being Eminabad, Shahdara and Cheema Gakhar. Several local Zamindars were raising troops and had grown refractory. Gakhars and Tiwanas in the Sind Sagar Doab, Chathas and Bajwas in the Rachna Doab, Hindu faqirs of Gurdaspur and Jandiala, Randhawa Zamindars of Batala parganah and Afghans of Kasur in the Bari Doab, Rajputs of Talwan, Phagwara and Kapurthala and Afghans of Alawalpur in the Jullundur Doab were becoming all powerful. The Punjab Government could not pay even the salaries of its troops which had to be disbursed out of the money received from the faujdars of Adina Beg.<sup>1</sup>

1. Ahmad Shah Batalia, *Tarikh-i-Hind*, p. 870-71

### The Sikh Movement during the period from November 1753 to October 1756

All these upheavals happening in the interval between the death of Muin-ul-Mulk and the fourth invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali not only encouraged but also very considerably strengthened the Sikhs. The Sikhs took all these advantages which the local distinctions of a falling empire offered them, of extending and establishing their power. Their bands under their most active leaders plundered in every direction. Jassa Singh Thoka got Ram Rauni, the ruined fort of Amritsar, rebuilt and renamed it Ramgarh (God's fort). Making this place as the base of their operations, the Sikhs sallied out and reached the very environs of Lahore where they fought and harassed Qasim Khan, the faujdar designate of Patti (March 1754). After this, the Sikhs advanced towards Eminabad and molested Khwaja Mirza, the faujdar of the place. Khwaja Mirza, being a man of vigorous nature, enlisted five or six thousand fresh Turki troops from his homeland and with the help of this force succeeded in expelling the Sikhs from his territory.

Charat Singh and Jai Singh, at the head of 500 Sikhs dressed in Muslim style entered Lahore one dark evening and plundered the rich merchants and jewellers, living near the palaces of Begams known as Pari Mahal and Rang Mahal. Momin Khan, the then Deputy Governor (November 1753 to November 1754) followed them and punished some of them.<sup>1</sup> About the end of 1754, the Dal Khalsa ravaged the Ambala district and about 12,000 Sikhs plundered Sirhind thoroughly and then retreated to Thikriwala.

The Sikhs once more dashed into the capital (Lahore) and when Khwaja Mirza was the governor of Lahore (December 1754—April 1755), they frequently troubled him. The sack of Sirhind was undertaken by the Sikhs for the first time after Banda Bahadur.

They helped Adina Beg (March-April 1755) in his fight against Qutab Khan Rohilla whom he defeated and killed on the 11th April, 1755 on the bank of the Sutlej opposite Ropar. Adina Beg, thereafter, crossed the river Sutlej and marched upto Shahabad, Thanesar, Guram, Mansurpura and Mustafabad.

In June 1755, the Sikhs left Adina Beg Khan near Thanesar

---

1. Rattan Singh Bhangu, *Prachin Panth Parkash*, pp. 311-12 (Momin Khan is said to have been murdered by the Sikhs during one of his expeditions against them).

and advanced further into Namaul and Kanaud, the territory of Madho Singh, Raja of Jaipur. The Raja of Jaipur called Marathas to his aid, whereupon the Sikhs retired towards Punjab.<sup>1</sup> On the way back, they annoyed Adina Beg and compelled him to cede to them the parganah of Fatehabad, by way of Jagir, in November 1755. About April, 1756, they harassed Sayyad Jamil-ud-Din in the environs of Lahore. They afterwards seem to have comfortably settled in the Upper Bari Doab in the districts of Kalanaur, Batala and Amritsar, which became their strongholds in future.<sup>2</sup>

### Emergence of Rakhi System—Sikh Protectorate

The period is important in some other respect also. A further development in the rise of the Sikh power took place which was soon to lead them to the final stage of their becoming a political power. The anarchy and misrule had ruined peasantry and trade of the province. The people in general were sick of daily marauding inflicted on them. They needed a ruler who could guarantee them the security of their lives and property and they knew that the Dal Khalsa alone could bring them such a peace.

The Dal Khalsa, responsive to the feelings of the people, seized the opportunity. They were the only organised powerful people among the lawless marauders of the country who inspired fear and awe not only in the minds of the people but also in the government of the day. They offered a plan to the villagers individually. The villagers were to place themselves under the protection of Dal Khalsa on a promise to pay one-fifth of their income twice a year in May and October. The Sikhs in return were to afford them full protection against plunder, theft or molestation either by themselves or by their neighbours and government troops. In a word, the safety of their persons was to be guaranteed. This system was termed Rakhi or Jamadari.<sup>3</sup>

At this point Browne's evidence is pertinent. He says, 'Whenever a Zamindar has agreed to pay this tribute to any Sikh chief, that chief not only honestly refrains from plundering him, but will protect him from all others; and this protection is by general consent held so far sacred that even if grandary (Dal Khalsa) passed through a Zamindari where the safeguards of the

1. *Selections from the Peshwa's Daftar*, XXVII, 100.

2. Lepel Griffin, *Rajas of the Panjab*, p. 158.

3. Dr. H.R. Gupta, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol. I.

lowest Sikh chief 'are stationed, it will not desolate them.'<sup>1</sup>

To the villagers, weary of confusion and anarchical condition for a long time, the Rakhi plan was a boon and no wonder, many villages entered into their Rakhi agreement with the Dal Khalsa. As a consequence of it, in a short time large slices of territory in as many as four out of five Doabs of the Punjab were taken under protection by the Dal. This protection was extended by individual chiefs of the different units of the Dal Khalsa. Sometimes under necessity, two or more chiefs combined together to extend protection. A reserved force was stationed at Amritsar for the purpose of reinforcement in case of emergency.

To make the system workable, different sections of the Dal Khalsa were allotted a particular area to patrol for peace and security. The bands of Sardar Karor Singh and Sardar Deep Singh Shaheed moved to the south of the river Sutlej. The Singh Puria and Ahluwalia sections were sent to the area of the river Ghara, beyond the conjunction of the rivers Beas and Sutlej, to protect the population on both sides of it. Sardar Jai Singh Kanhiya and Sardar Jassa Sing Ramgarhia were placed in charge of the Riarki area. Sardar Charat Singh Sukarchakia and Sardar Hari Singh Bhangi had Doaba Rachna, between the Ravi and the Chenab, in their charge, in addition to the Doaba Chaj, between the Chenab and Jehlum. The Nishanwalia and Dallewalia Misls were stationed at Amritsar so as to be drafted for duty wherever needed to maintain peace and order and also to help the Sikh Sardars. The Nakki section was allotted the territory of Naqqa, the sub-district of Chunian and the area adjoining it. The Sardars raised a number of forts at convenient centres, where garrisons were stationed to enforce authority.<sup>2</sup>

Rakhi system lent a new dimension to the Sikh movement. It secured for the movement a strong economic base for the time being and created for the Sikh chiefs the principalities which they were soon to rule over as their absolute masters. Thus this step supplied them with the idea of raising themselves into territorial chieftains. In fact, the system was the first concrete step towards becoming the ruler of the country.

1. Browne, op. cit., Introduction, vii.

Sohan Lal, *Umdat-ut-Twarikh*, II, p. 5.

2. Sohan Lal, op. cit., p. 5.

## Mughlani Begam and Timur Khan

### Fourth invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali

Soon after Jangbaz Khan's departure from Kabul, the Shah left for India. This time he came to India in response to the invitations of Mughlani Begam, Najib Khan (Najib-ud-Daula) and Emperor Alamgir II himself.<sup>1</sup> Mughlani Begam had written to Ahmad Shah Durrani, "Goods and cash worth crores of rupees lie buried to my knowledge in the palace of my late father-in-law, besides heaps of gold and silver store inside the ceilings. A perfect disagreement exists among the Emperor Alamgir II, his Wazirs and nobles. If you invade India this time, the Indian Empire with all its riches of crores will fall into your hands without your incurring any expenditure." Najib sent his own brother Sultan Khan to invite the Shah to come to India immediately with a large force. "In this country", wrote Najib-ud-Daula, "I have gathered round myself twenty-five thousand Afghans. I have also persuaded forty thousand of the Afghans from the other side of the river Ganges for your service. You may come without any hesitation or fear. Imad-ul-Mulk (Ghazi-ud-Din) is not strong enough to oppose you. I am his chief supporter. Now that I have become obedient to you, there is no one left there (to help him)."<sup>2</sup> Alamgir II had also given his tacit consent to Najib to invite Ahmad Shah Durrani. The interests of the Durrani also demanded that he should teach a lesson to the Wazir, Ghazi-ud-Din who had cast his covetous glances on the Punjab and had the audacity to meddle with the arrangement made by him.

Accordingly, the Durrani detached an envoy, named Qalandar Beg Khan to demand satisfaction for Imad's attack upon his master's authority at Lahore while the main army set out to invade India once more. In the middle of November Ahmad Shah himself reached Peshawar, his vanguard led by Timur Shah arrived at Hassan Abdal and pushed a detachment on to the city of Gujrat to collect provisions for the main army about to follow. Delhi itself was known to be Abdali's objective this time. The Afghan invaders, passing through and plundering Eminabad and Batala, advanced upon Adina Beg's camp at Jalalabad.<sup>3</sup> Adina Beg fled away with

1. *Ali-ud-Din*, p. 248; *Abwal-i-Najib-ud-Daula*, p. 14.

2. *Tazkira-i-Imad*, pp. 166-68.

*Tarikh-i-Ali*, pp. 255-56.

3. 25 miles S.E. of Amritsar.

his family, Jamil-ud-Din and Sadiq Beg, and by way of Nur Mahal, Sodra and Thara, he reached Hansi. The Afghan commander-in-chief Sardar Jahan Khan occupied the Jullundur Doab upto the bank of the Sudej without a blow (early in December). Shortly after, an Afghan detachment under Hassan Khan crossed the Sutlej and occupied Sirhind which had been vacated by its inhabitants, Jahan Khan, with the vanguard, arrived near the city about January 5, 1757 and then pushed on towards Delhi by way of Panipat.


Ahmad Shah reached Lahore on December 20, 1756. It was here that he was reported that Ranjit Dev of Jammu had prepared himself for war against the Afghans and had retired from Lahore only when Sayyad Jamil-ud-Din had found himself incapable of resisting them. He, therefore, ordered 10 thousand soldiers to proceed against him. Ranjit Dev offered no resistance and purchased peace by paying a large sum. The Afghan king then crossed the Sutlej and reached Delhi on the 23rd of January 1757.

There had been great consternation in the capital of the Mughal Empire ever since the news of march of Ahmad Shah Durrani to India reached there in October 1756, followed by the visit of his envoy, Qalandar Khan. The Wazir, Ghazi-ud-Din Imad-ul-Mulk, was trembling with fear and did not know what to do. Neither Intazam-ud-Daula nor Shujah-ud-Daula, son of Safdar Jang, was in a mood to help him. With the disbandment of Sindagh Rasala, he had no army worth the name to support his cause. Najib-ud-Daula Rohilla had secretly allied himself with the Shah.

The Wazir tried to get help from Suraj Mal Jat of Bharatpur, but failed. He did not succeed even to enlist the active co-operation of the Marathas; only a contingent of the Marathas under Antak Rao came to his help. Unable to organise any defence and finding himself helpless against Durrani, Ghazi-ud-Din found refuge in diplomatic negotiations with him. He sent Agha Raza Khan, Yakub Ali Khan and Shah Fana to the Shah to dissuade Ahmad Shah from coming to Delhi, but to no effect. Driven to abject helplessness, Ghazi-ud-Din entreated Mughlani Begam who was then at Delhi to proceed to the camp of the invader to persuade him to desist from invading Delhi. Mughlani Begam in response to his entreaties set out for the Punjab<sup>1</sup> on the 11th January, 1757 and met Ahmad Shah on the 13th January, 1757 but

1. *Tahmas Namah*, 62a-63a.

*Tarikh-i-Alamgir Sami*, 89a.

According to *Delhi Chronicle*, Mughlani Begam left Delhi at mid-



she could not succeed in her mission. To her request, the Shah replied, "You should have come to Lahore and told me all this, and I could have gone back from there. Now that I have come within forty Kos of Shahjahanabad (Delhi), it is not wise for me to go back without seeing the city of Delhi and the Badshah of India."

The Afghan vanguard under Jahan Khan pushed on to the suburbs of Delhi, followed by the main army under the Shah. Najib-ud-Daula's Rohilla deserted the cause of Delhi on the 16th January, 1757 and joined Jahan Khan's army. The Marathas, having put up some resistance under Antaji Makeshvar to the Afghan vanguard, left the city for Kotputli.<sup>1</sup> Ghazi-ud-Din obviously could not defend the capital on the 20th January, 1757. Ghazi-ud-Din, through Abdali's Wazir Shah Wali Khan, met Ahmad Shah and offered his submission.

◀ night of the 10th January 1757, in response to the entreaties of Ghazi-ud-Din, she arrived at Sonepat on the same date at about 10 p.m. She despatched two of her messengers, Tahmas Khan and Ghulam Khan in advance with letters for the Shah, his minister Shah Wali Khan and Sardar Jahan Khan. Begam overtook the messengers at Panipat where she received letters from Jahan Khan to say that he had arrived at Karnal. She then directed her messengers to accompany Jahan Khan's 'Harkaras' and they arrived at Karnal before sunset. Jahan Khan immediately detailed four of his sowars to go in advance to receive the Begam, who arrived in the camp at about 10 o'clock the following morning (January 12, 1757 A.D.).

Mughlani Begam had a short interview with Jahan Khan, who moved forward towards Panipat and left a few men at Karnal to look to the arrangements of the Shah's encampment. The Shah arrived there in the afternoon. The Begam fixed her camp near the Shah Wali Khan and explained to him the object of her mission. Then she was received by Ahmad Shah (January 13, 1757, afternoon). After some talk the Shah said, "You should have come to Lahore and told me all this and I could have gone back from there. Now that I have come within forty-two Kos of Shahjahanabad (Delhi) it is not wise for me to go back without seeing the city of Delhi and Badshah of India. He then wrote down a few soothing letters and handed them over to the Begam for despatch to Delhi. She made them over to Tahmas Khan with a separate confidential note for the Wazir (sewn up in the cap of the messenger and explained to him personally) that if he had not the strength to fight, he should remove himself from Delhi to some place of safety or he would land himself in trouble. (Tahmas Nama 62a-64b.)

1. *Tarikh-i-Alamgir Sani*, 91a-92a; *Tabmas Nama* 65a.

On the 21st of January, while the Emperor was saying his afternoon prayer in the palace mosque, Abdul Ahad Khan and Saif-ud-Din Muhammad Khan Kashmiri (the brother of Aqibat Mahmud) went to Raushan-ud-Daula's mosque with its bloody memories of Nadir Shah's massacre, called the chief sadr, the Imperial Qazi and the Muftis there, and caused the Khutba to be read in the name of Ahmad Shah Durrani. The same thing was done in the Jama Masjid. Not one theologian or scholar refused to read the Khutba in another prince's name, while the Emperor of the age was living in the citadel of the capital and had not been slain or made prisoner or expelled.

There is no evidence that this step was ordered by the Abdali king; it was the work of the native sycophants who wished to gain the conqueror's favour by this proof of zeal in his cause.<sup>1</sup> When Alamgir heard the news, he washed his hands of kingship, vacated the royal chambers (the Rang Mahal, the Khwabgah), the private portico, and the lower portico, for occupation by his successor, handed over the keys to an officer of Najib and moved with his entire family to the Shah Burj quarter. Two days later, he was ordered to vacate even this refuge and return to the small common place room in which he used to lodge before his elevation to the throne. It was found that these last named quarters were totally unfit for habitation.

On the 23rd January, the Afghan troops took charge of Delhi from Najib's hands. Ahmad Shah Abdali rode into the Red Fort on the 27th January.

Secure in the possession of Delhi, the conqueror began the exaction of a money tribute. He himself ordered Imad-ul-Mulk, the Delhi Wazir, to hand over all his gold and jewels. On pleading poverty, he was chastised to an extreme degree of dishonour and his servants were severely beaten. He surrendered ornaments and gold to the value of one crore of rupees and gold coins worth above three lakhs. Intazam-ud-Daula, the ex-Wazir was also summoned and committed to produce one crore of rupees immediately. He replied, "This moment beyond this one ring that I have on my finger, I have no control over even one rupee." When he was threatened to be punished by pillory, he replied, "Whatever treasure there was, my father caused to be buried within his mansion. The widow, Sholapuri Begam knows about it." The

---

1. J.N. Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Vol. II.

Begam was immediately ordered to be produced. This old lady, the daughter-in-law of one great Wazir, the widow of another, and the mother of a third, was told that unless she showed the spot, iron pins would be driven underneath the nails of her fingers. She fainted at the threat, and on recovery pointed out the room of the buried hoard. After three days of constant digging of the floor and breaking up of the ceilings, goods and cash worth one and a half crores were recovered from underneath the earth, in addition to large quantity of invaluable diamonds, emeralds, pearls and rubies, mattings and carpets of foreign make and gold-silver-covered maces, which were taken possession of by the Shah. In addition the Afghans selected one hundred beautiful women from the Harem-Sarai and carried them along.

The houses of other rich nobles were also searched. The residences of all the persons who had fled were broken open and plundered including that of Said-ud-Din Khan-i-Saman, Raja Nagar Mal and Hiranand Jauhari, the Prince of jewellers.

A regular levy was imposed on every house in the city and its suburbs. Afghan soldiers were posted in every street and lane. They demanded more than the capacity of the people to pay. Beating and torture were applied almost to every case. People wanted to sell their property, but there was no customer. Thousands of men and women died under torture. Thousands took poison and jumped into the wells.

Mughlani Begam, the widow of Mir Mannu, acted as Abdali's informer regarding the secrets of every Delhi's nobles' family and property and the beauty of the inmates of the Imperial Harem. Thus, the conqueror's desire for Hazrat Begam, the youthful daughter of Muhammad Shah, was kindled.

Abdali made changes among the Delhi ministers. Najib Khan was created Mir Bakhshi or head of the army of the Empire. Yakub Ali Khan, lord chamberlain, and Badr-ud-Daula, chief of artillery and commandant of the Delhi palace. Finally in his camp near Mathura, on the 18th March, the Afghan king restored Imad to the Wazirship in recognition of his courage and zeal shown in the Jat campaign. Imad was again given the post of Wazirship. On the night of 20-21 February, Ahmad Shah in his own presence married Imad to Umda Begam and next day left Delhi on a campaign to Agra and the Jat country on Friday the 25th of that month. The Khutba was once more read in the name of Alamgir.

After this, Abdali marched against the Jat country south of

Delhi. He himself captured Balabhgarh and his commander-in-chief defeated the Jats in the battle of Chaumaha. Having done this, Afghans sacked Mathura and massacred its people. Similarly Gokal was attacked and plundered. Here 2000 monks who wore martial robes, courted death while defending the deity of Gokal (Gokal Nath). Jahan Khan plundered and fined Agra. During all these expeditions, atrocities on a large scale were perpetrated. A Muslim eye-witness thus describes the scene in the ruined city of Mathura :

"Everywhere in lane and bazaar lay the headless trunks of the slain, and the whole city was burning. Many buildings had been knocked down. The water of Jamuna flowing past was of a yellowish colour, as if polluted by blood."<sup>1</sup>

Soon after nature came to the rescue of the Indian people. Cholera broke out in the ranks of the Durrani, and he was forced to retire. In his return march, the important halts were Faridabad, Sarai Basant and Sarai Suhail which were the suburbs of Delhi, Sonapat, Tarauri, Karnal, Sirhind and Lahore.

Abdali carried away from India huge booty. The human booty of war included Hazarat Begam, the maiden daughter of Emperor Muhammad Shah. According to J.N. Sarkar, "This princess, on reaching her 16th year in February 1756, had excited the passion of Alamgir II, who had shamelessly demanded her hand in marriage, but the girl had replied, 'I prefer death to such a marriage.' And now this tender lamb was to be pounced upon by a fierce Afghan of grand-fatherly age whose two ears had been wrecked and nose was rotting from a leprous carbuncle. At Abdali's demand for her hand, there was wailing and alarm in the Imperial harem. The two dowager-empresses cried out, 'We shall slay her and then kill ourselves, but we will not give her to an Afghan,' but there was no escape for her." Other important ladies present in the retreating camp were Alamgir II's daughter, Gauhar-Nisa, the daughter of Dawar Bakhsh and great grand-daughter of Aurangzeb whom Nadir Shah had married to his son, Nasrullah in A.D. 1739 and whom Ahmad Shah Abdali had taken to his bed after the murder of Nadir. Besides this, many other beautiful ladies belonging to people in general were taken as captives. A Marathi letter reports, "The Pathan has taken away the handsome wives

1. *Massacre and Sack of Mathura*, Ind. Antiquity, pp. 60-62.

of the Amirs and of other people and sent them off to Lahore."

The material booty carried away from India was immense. Abdali's own goods were loaded on 28000 camels, elephants, mules, bullocks and carts, while 200 camel loads of property were taken by Muhammad Shah's widow who accompanied him, and these too belonged to him. Eighty thousand horse and foot followed him, each man carrying away spoils. His cavalry returned on foot, loading their booty on their chargers. For securing transport the Afghan king left no horse or camel in any one's house, not even a donkey.<sup>1</sup> The enormous transport is a clear proof of the immensity of the plunder taken away by Abdali.

### **Sikhs Relieve Abdali of His Booty**

With the news of the march of Abdali, the Lahore government lost its nerves. Sayyad Jamil-ud-Din fled to Delhi, Adina Beg sought his safety in the wastes of Hissar and Hansi. In this way, nearly the whole of the Punjab was at the mercy of the Sikhs. The Sikhs spread all over the country and thoroughly plundered the houses of their enemies and the places which did not fall within the jurisdiction of their Rakhi system.

They were also vigilant and alert in respect of the movements of Abdali. While the Shah's van under Timur and Jahan Khan was on its way to Lahore with the booty of the campaign, the Sikhs found a favourable opportunity to attack it. Sardar Ala Singh of Patiala and some other Sikh chiefs collected at Sirhind, attacked the prince between Ambala and Patiala and carried away his treasury. A second attack was made by him at Malerkotla and the Afghan army was harassed and plundered. Such was the terror created by the successes of the Sikhs that even prince Timur, was rumoured, of course wrongly, to have been captured and killed by them. This happened at the end of March, 1757.<sup>2</sup>

As a retaliation to the Sikh harassment, Timur Khan sacked Kartarpur, the town which was important for its Gurdwaras, or Sikh temples, sacred to the memory of the fifth and the sixth Gurus, Guru Arjan and Guru Hargobind. The Gurdwaras were set on fire and their buildings, including the historical pillar, called the Thamm Sahib, were all reduced to ashes and desecrated with the blood of slaughtered cows.<sup>3</sup>

1. *Selections from the Peshwa's Daftar*, G.S. Sardesai, Vol. II, p. 71.

2. J.N. Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Vol. II.

3. Nizam-ud-Din, *Shah Nama Ahmadiya*, pp. 210-223.

Ahmad Shah Abdali himself was similarly dispossessed of a large part of the booty on his way back home from Delhi. In his rage Ahmad Shah bit his arm and when he reached Lahore, he sent large expeditions to chastise the Sikhs. A good number of them were captured and put to death. The city of Amritsar was sacked; its buildings were razed to the ground, the sacred tank was desecrated by filling it with trash and refuse.<sup>1</sup>

While on his way to Qandhar via Peshawar and Kabul, Abdali was much harassed by Charat Singh Sukarchakia who had established himself at Gujranwala. With his picked Sikh horse-men, he would pounce upon the Afghans in the evening when they were pitching their tents for the night's halt, fight for some time and then disappear in the darkness with whatever he could lay his hands upon. The Shah wished to fight a decisive battle with him but Charat Singh gave no such opportunity and kept on harassing him till he had got to the river Indus and crossed it.<sup>2</sup>

Before leaving for his home country, Abdali installed his son, Timur Shah as the viceroy of the Punjab, including all his Indian possessions and appointed Sardar Jahan Khan as his Naib Minister as well as the commander-in-chief. An army of ten to fifteen thousand horses and foot with artillery was left at their disposal. To these, in due course, were added contingents raised in the country. With a view to winning over Ranjit Dev of Jammu to the side of Timur and securing the north-eastern hills against any rebellion, the Shah bestowed on him the parganahs of Zafarwal, Sankhatra and Aurangabad of the present district of Saikot.<sup>3</sup>

Abdus Samad Khan Muhammad Zei of Hasht Nagar was appointed to the government of Sirhind, Sarfraz Khan to that of

---

1. Abdul Karim Ulvi, *Tarikh-i-Ahmadi*, pp. 9-10, printed at Mustabi Press, Cawnpore, 1819.

Marathi despatch dated 1757 reproduced in *Rujwade* Vol. I, p. 85.  
 "At the end of March 1757 when the front division of Ahmad Shah Abdali's army under prince Timur was transporting the plundered wealth of Delhi to Lahore, Ala Singh, in concert with other Sikh robbers had barred his path at Sanaur (between Patiala and Ambala) and robbed him of half of his treasures and again attacked and plundered and attacked him at Malerkotla. So great had been the Sikhs of these brigands that rumour had magnified it into Prince's captivity and later death at their hands."

2. *Haqiqat-i-Bina-o-Aruj-i-Firqa-i-Sikhan*, p. 36

3. Dr. Ganda Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, p. 189.



the Doaba Bist Jullundur and Buland Khan Saddozei of Multan to Kashmir.

Mughlani Begam expected a big reward but was given nothing. The grant of territories of Doaba Bist Jullundur, Jammu and Kashmir which was bestowed on her during the campaign, was soon cancelled by Abdali. This was distasteful to the Begam who accompanied him as far as the river Jehlum imploring him to allow her to retain the promised fief. But in the interest of a strong government in the Punjab under his son, a woman of the type of Mughlani Begam could not be allowed to hold the Jullundur Doab and thus interpose a break between Lahore and Sirhind, nor could the Punjab province be shorn of its northern hill territories, Jammu and Kashmir.

## Chapter 7

# PUNJAB UNDER TIMUR SHAH

(May 1757—April 1758)

From May 1757 to April 1758, Punjab was ruled over by Timur Shah as a province of his father's (Ahmad Shah) Empire. He was assisted by Ahmad Shah's ablest general Sardar Jahan Khan in the dual capacity of Wazir and Commander-in-Chief. The backbone of his armed force consisted of 10,000 Persian troops of his father's army. Jahan Khan, however, enlisted India-born soldiers on the lower scale of pay prevailing in this country. This military strength and the terror of the Abdali king who stood behind his son, imposed peace and order on that unhappy province after the late chaos. "Justice was done in the capital and the districts and the roads became safe for traffic once more."<sup>1</sup> But in spite of the best efforts Timur<sup>2</sup> Shah failed to keep order and peace in the province and ultimately had to flee to Kabul.

The circumstances which forced the Durranis to flee from the

1. J.N. Sarkar, *Decline and Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Vol. II, p. 67.
2. Timur was born in Persian Meshed in 1746. During much of his father's life-time, he was stationed in the Punjab, one of his many wives being a Mughal princess and later he was governor of Harat where Persian was the ruling tongue. His Persian affinities made him a man of taste and culture in the contemporary idiom; he delighted in the arts and particularly in the embellishment of buildings and the lay-out of formal gardens. Timur had a large family, twenty-three sons and daughters unnumbered. He pursued his father's policy of alliance with the daughters of tribal chiefs, thereby seeking to attach the tribe to his person. He, unlike his father, had great love for Kabul and Peshawar. He succeeded his father in October 1772. He disliked the rough manners of Durrani nobles and in the choice of ministers his disposition to Persian scribes and munshis. He nominally retained the Khans in the dignities in which his father had placed them but by instituting new offices and shifting the emphasis, he duplicated the conduct of administration and threw the power into the hands of his dependents. The tribal levies he disbanded, keeping about his person only a bodyguard of Qizalbash known as the Ghulam-i-Shah, the King's

Punjab were the determined opposition of the Sikhs to their rule, their incapacity to win over some of the strong and intelligent officials such as Adina Beg, their failure to wipe out the confidence of the people by initiating certain public-utility projects, and lastly the success of Adina Beg and Sikhs to get the co-operation of the Marathas in driving the Afghans out of the country. The details of the different events which took place during the viceroyalty of the son of Ahmad Shah Abdali are as under.

The first thing that Prince Timur Shah had to attend to was the establishment of peace and order. To this purpose, he thought of befriending Adina Beg. No doubt, Ahmad Shah had ordered the appointment of Sarfraz Khan to the government of Doaba Bist Jullundur, yet the prince decided to confirm Adina Beg as the faujdar of the Jullundur Doab. What prompted him to take this decision is not difficult to understand. Adina Beg was an arch-intriguer, a good administrator and had been confirmed in the government of Jullundur Doab by Mughlani Begam to whom the territory had been originally given by the Shah. Moreover, Adina Beg had administered that Doab for such a long time—ever since Abdus Samad's regime—and established such local influence there, especially by his understanding with the Sikhs, that it was recognised on all hands that he was the only man who could keep that territory in order and extract any revenue from it.<sup>1</sup> Timur wrote to Adina Beg, "Ahmad Shah Abdali had at first decided to march upon the Deccan and had, therefore, given this country to the Begam. Now that the intention of going to the south has been abandoned the government of this kingdom upto the south boundary of Sirhind, has been assigned to us. You should, therefore, present yourself at our court. In the case of disobedience to this order, the entire Doaba shall be over-run and devastated and the war shall be carried on to the hills also." Adina wavered for some time because he hoped that Mughlani Begam would get the order re-issued to the effect that she was the holder of Bist Jullundur, Jammu and Kashmir. But when he came to know that the Begam had returned disappointed from the Shah's camp to Lahore where she lived in dilapidated quarters of Sarai Hakim

☛ slaves, their devotion served his person and maintained the tranquility of the capital but the remote provinces gradually threw off the submission offered to Ahmad Shah. Timur Shah was taken ill on his way upto Kabul from Peshawar and died in the spring of 1793.

1. J.N. Sarkar, *Decline and Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Vol. II, p. 67.

near the crossing, he changed his mind.

He, through his agent Dila Rai, entered into negotiations with Timur Shah. Dila Rai succeeded in obtaining for his master the *faujdari* of the Jullundur Doab and exemption from personal attendance at Lahore on undertaking to pay thirty-six lakhs of rupees annually. Dila Rai stayed at Lahore as a personal surety for the payment of the tribute. Adina Beg Khan accepted the arrangements and regularly remitted his monthly instalments. Adina Beg thus befriended. There was a comparative calm in the capital and the districts. But peace depended on many other factors, viz., tactful handling of the Sikhs, the statesman-like attitude towards men who mattered, and long vision. All these factors would have to be taken cognizance of if permanent peace was to prevail.

Not long afterwards, intelligence was received by Jahan Khan that the Sikhs were assembling in large numbers at Chak Guru (Amritsar) to have a holy bath and to repair the holy buildings.

According to the practice in Afghanistan, he proclaimed Holy War (Jihad) against the Sikhs by the beat of drum in the city of Lahore and called upon everyone possessing a horse, irrespective of his being a servant of the state or not, to accompany him to the field of battle. Even the Begam, who had only twenty-five Sowars in her service, had to send them all under Tahmas Khan. This force numbered about twenty-two thousand horse-men. Jahan Khan led this force to Amritsar and wrote to Atai Khan to meet him there on an appointed day to make a concerted attack on the Sikhs.

The Sikhs, in the meantime, received the intelligence of the march of Lahore force against them. They rushed from all sides, and mobilised themselves under the leadership of Deep Singh.<sup>1</sup> They marched out from Tarn Taran in the gala dress of a

---

1. Deep Singh belonged to the village Pahuvind in the district of Lahore, and had received baptism from the hands of Guru Gobind Singh himself. He was one of the most scholarly Sikhs of his time and had helped the tenth Guru along with Bhai Mani Singh in preparing the final recension of *Adi Granth*. He was in charge of the Gurdwara of Talwandi Sabo, called Damdama Sahib. Hearing at Damdama Sahib about the desecration of the Golden Temple at Amritsar, Deep Singh started at once to avenge the insult. Sikhs went on rallying round him as he proceeded towards the *Majha*; and by the time, he reached Tarn Taran, he had about 5000 men with him. In the battle of Gohbar, ◀

bridegroom, with festal ribbons on their wrists and saffron sprinkled on their robes. Fighting began at a place two Kos from Amritsar. Haji Atai Khan, in spite of urgent orders, had not as yet arrived. In the initial stage of war, Jahan Khan was hard-pressed; but then Haji Atai Khan reached with reinforcements. The Sikhs were defeated and put to flight. Many of them were killed. Amritsar was occupied; five Sikh infantry men were standing on a guard before a screened door evidently of the Hari Mandir<sup>1</sup> were slain and the sacred tank filled up.

Deep Singh and his four devoted Jathedars with many others lost their lives in the battle. A monument was raised to the memory of Baba Deep Singh at Ram Sar (near the side of Ram Rauni fort) that of Ram Singh Jathedar in the Katra (street) of Ramgarhias and of Sajjan Singh, Bahadur Singh, Agarh Singh and Hira Singh at Guru Ka Bagh, while a Shaheed Ganj (abode of martyrs) commemorates the martyrdom of Kaur Singh, Manna Singh, Sant Singh etc.

As Baba Deep Singh and his followers had given up their lives while performing a religious duty without causing any harm to anybody, they were all given the title of Shaheeds (martyrs) by their co-religionists. After Baba Deep Singh, the leadership of his Misl passed to another leader of note named Karam Singh who retained the title of Shaheed for himself as well as for his Misl.

After his victory Jahan Khan destroyed and polluted all the places of worship of the Sikhs at Amritsar and filled up the sacred tank.<sup>2</sup>

The attack of Timur's forces upon the holy temple and city of the Sikhs added fuel to the fire of the Sikh fury against the Afghans. Then occurred another incident which further aggravated the situation. Two Afghan troopers coming from Sirhind were, by chance, killed in the territory of Kot Buddha Ramdas. Jahan Khan flew into rage and despatched a few mounted bailiffs to the Chaudhari of the place, evidently to compel him to produce the

☛ he received a mortal wound, but supporting his wounded head he went on fighting until he fell dead in the precincts of the Golden Temple. The place where his head fell has been made memorable by raising a cenotaph on it. Similarly the place outside Ramsar where he was wounded is also marked with a memorial.

1. Tahmas Khan Miskin, *Tazkirah-e-Tabmas*, MS, p. 165.

2. Malcolm. op. cit., p. 94.

Brown, op. cit., p. 19.

culprits. The Chaudhari was tortured to the extremity and he could save his life by managing to fly away. Since he was much respected among the Sikhs, the entire Sikh community felt insulted at this outrage. "From that very moment the peace and order that had been established in the country were upset and the Sikhs rose in rebellion on all sides."<sup>1</sup>

### **Defeat of the Afghans by Adina Beg and the Sikhs in concert**

The Sikh menace was assuming alarming proportion day after day. The need was that a concerted effort should be made to maintain peace. But the unstatesman-like attitude of Jahan Khan towards Adina Beg spoilt the chances. Some interested people instigated Timur Shah against him, evidently under a false sense of prestige and under pressure for money required to run the administration of the country. "Adina Beg Khan has property worth lakhs," said they, "and he intentionally avoids attendance at the royal Darbar. If he is sent for, he would certainly not come. Having arrested and imprisoned him for that fault of disobedience a lot of money can be had from him, and satisfactory arrangements can also be made for the country. The suggestion appealed to the inexperienced and the needy prince and he issued the necessary orders to Jahan Khan."<sup>2</sup>

Jahan Khan summoned Adina Beg to Lahore. Adina Beg declined to obey the summons and clearly perceiving the consequences of the disobedience withdrew to inaccessible recesses of the Shivaliks.

Not receiving any favourable reply from Adina Beg Khan, Jahan Khan threw his agent, Dila Rai, into prison. Mughlani Begam stood personal surety for the payment of six lakhs of rupees, secured his release and managed his escape to his master's place asking him to make immediate arrangements for the payment of the money. For this purpose, she had already sent to him some of her jewels so that he might raise the required funds against them and absolve her from her personal obligations. Jahan Khan was highly enraged at this and he ordered her arrest forthwith. The furious Khan himself beat her with a stick and her ornaments were taken away. Begam's residence was ransacked and all her property

1. J.N. Sarkar, *Decline and Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Vol. II, p. 68.

2. Dr. Ganda Singh, *Ahmad Shah Abdali*, p. 164-65



was confiscated.<sup>1</sup> Thus the Begam found to her great mortification the dishonourable part that she had played only brought her shame and ruin and the part of a traitor is not merely unprofitable but also dishonourable. Jahan Khan, then turned his attention to Adina Beg. This time he employed trickery to bring Adina to Lahore. He sent Mirza Ghulam Hussain, who was held by Adina in great esteem, to prevail upon him to the court of Timur, while he himself began military preparations to fall upon him unawares. In the meantime, Adina was informed of the impending attack of Jahan Khan, and he slipped into the hills of Nalagarh.<sup>2</sup>

At this time Mirza Jan Khan left Jahan Khan and joined Adina Beg Khan. The reason for his desertion was that the Mirza found it difficult to get on with the Afghan minister, who openly accused him of intriguing with the Sikhs. The shrewd Adina lost no time to arrive at some sort of settlement with Sodhi Wadbhag Singh and Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. The Sikhs were already burning with rage against the Afghans at the massacres at Kartarpur and Amritsar and the desecration of their Gurdwaras. To them, it was a God-sent opportunity and they availed themselves of it with great eagerness. Adina Beg also won over Sidiq Beg, the deputy governor of Sirhind and Raja Bhup Singh.<sup>3</sup>

In this way, Adina Beg collected an army of twenty-five thousand horsemen.

Jahan Khan was also alive to the situation. Hearing of the disturbances in the Punjab, Ahmad Shah had ordered Murad Khan, the governor of Multan to proceed to Lahore with an army of ten thousand horse to assist Jahan Khan in his military operations against the Sikhs. Jahan Khan assigned the command of this expeditionary force against Adina Beg to Murad Khan. He also sent Sarfraz Khan, the faujdar-designate of the Doab and Buland Khan to act as his deputies.

The two armies grappled with each other at Mahilpur (December 1757). Adina Beg's soldiers wore tafts of grass on their heads to enable the Sikhs to distinguish between them and the soldiers of the Afghans. In spite of the Afghans being equipped with light pieces of artillery, they could not stand against the

1. *Tabmas Namah*, 79b-80a.

2. Ali-ud-Din, *Ibrat Nama*, p. 254.

Kanhiya Lal, *Turikh-i-Punjab*, p. 80.

3. *Shah Alam Nama*, 55-6; *Shah Namah-i-Ahmadiya*.

furious attacks of the Sikhs and were put to flight. Karam Singh of Pajgarh, belonging to the Dera (battalion) of Sham Singh, distinguished himself by his bravery in the battle. Buland Khan fell fighting and Murad Khan fled in panic to Lahore. According to Dr. Ganda Singh, "The victorious Sikhs then rushed upon the city of Jullundur and wreaked vengeance upon it. Saadat Khan Afridi was defeated in a skirmish and the city lay prostrate at their feet. Sodhi Wadbhag Singh egged them on to a general plunder and was personally responsible for some of the excesses committed by them. The dead body of Nasir Ali, who had been responsible for the wholesale slaughter at Kartarpur and for burning the Thamm Sahib Gurdwara, was dragged out of his grave and subjected to indignities. In this general melee and confusion, the adventurous people of the village of Dhogri and its neighbourhood also rushed into Jullundur and shared in the loot. Adina Beg, at last, came to its rescue and paid to the Sikhs a tribute of a lakh and a quarter of rupees to purchase their goodwill." The Sikhs, flushed with victory, ransacked the whole of the Doaba and pushed on to the neighbourhood of Lahore. The prestige of the Afghan arms disappeared altogether. The Sikhs began to collect tribute from the people of Doaba in the name of Karah Prasad, consecrated sweet pudding made of flour, ghee and sugar. In the Maratha records, we find that the Sikhs congregated around Lahore in the Doab and even in the Sirhind region. They defeated Saadat Khan Afridi in the Doab. They also defeated Khwaja Ubaid Khan who had been sent from Lahore and plundered him. All the artillery that the Shah had left behind was taken away. The number of Sikh horsemen also reached about ten thousand and the foot men were innumerable.<sup>1</sup> "Thousands of Sikhs raided the city (Lahore) every night and plundered the outlying suburbs, but no one dared come out of the city to repel them, rather the gates were ordered to be closed one hour after nightfall. The situation became worse day by day, and the administration of the state was all upset."<sup>2</sup>

Jahan Khan, on hearing the defeat of the Afghan army hurriedly moved from Lahore and met the retreating force at Batala. He ordered that Murad Khan should be publicly flogged. But it could not arouse the sagging spirit of the Afghans and the position

1. *Selections from the Peshwa's Daftar*, Ed. by Sardesai, II, 83.

2. *Tabmas Nama*, 78, a,b; Ahmad Shah Batalia, *Tarikh-i-Hind*, 872 (326).

lost in the Jullundur Doab could not be regained. The Khan gnashed his teeth in disappointment and despair.

### Expulsion of Afghans and the Role of the Sikhs

Adina Beg Khan, no doubt, repelled the attacks of Sarfraz Khan and Murad Khan on the Jullundur Doab. But he knew, he could not face the stronger forces of Jahan Khan, much less oppose with success, the superior and better equipped armies of His Afghan Majesty Ahmad Shah Durrani who might come down any time to retaliate the affront offered to his son and his representatives in the Punjab. Under the circumstances he took refuge in the impenetrable retreats of Nalagarh hills and Jahan Khan appointed Sarfraz Khan to the faujdari of Jullundur Doab. Now, he began to search for a reliable ally. As for the Sikhs, they could not be relied upon solely, because they had their own aspirations. They had not as yet forgotten the days of their independent rule under Banda Singh and they eagerly looked forward to the day when 'the Khalsa shall rule and no refractory shall exist (Raj Karega Khalsa āki Rahe Na Koi).' This being so, they would not allow Adina to be the *de facto* ruler of the Punjab, and this exactly was his life's ambition. Adina Beg Khan, therefore, made up his mind to tap a more fruitful source and opened negotiations with the Marathas, who according to him had so much to do elsewhere that it would not be possible for them to rule the Punjab directly and he would be able to administer it in their name. He sent Har Lal and Sadiq Beg to open negotiations with Raghunath Rao, the brother of Balaji Rao Peshwa who had stationed in the neighbourhood of Delhi with a vast army along with Malhar Rao Holkar in August 1757, and had just driven out Najib-ud-Daula from Delhi and Saharanpur. It was during these days before the 6th January 1758 that Adina Beg sent Har Lal and Sadiq Beg to negotiate with Raghunath Rao. Adina Beg offered to pay one lakh of rupees per day when they were marching and fifty thousand when halting.

Raghunath Rao readily accepted the offer and marched with the Maratha army to Sirhind towards the end of February 1758. Adina Beg Khan and his Sikh allies joined the Marathas when they reached in the neighbourhood of Sirhind. The Sikhs were particularly furious against the city of Sirhind. It was here that the younger sons of their Guru Gobind Singh had been butchered to death. They had, therefore, taken a promise from Adina Beg that

they should be allowed to enter the city first of all and sack it.

Abdus Samad Khan, the Afghan governor of Sirhind was quite alive to the new developments. Even before the conclusion of agreement between the Marathas and Adina Beg, he had taken cognizance of Maratha's advancement to Delhi and its environs.

He was keeping watchful eyes on the movements of the Marathas. In August 1757 a large Maratha army under Raghunath Rao with Malhar Holkar and some other generals had arrived near Delhi as the ally and master of the Wazir Imad-ud-Mulk. They fought and drove Najib-ud-Daula out of Delhi and for the next four months roved through the country round Delhi plundering the markets and exacting contributions from the landowners. Their success in taking away Najib's Jagir of Saharanpur emboldened them to talk of advancing to Lahore and wresting that province from Abdali's son, but somehow they shrank from attacking Punjab. Then after raiding many places in the Gangetic Doab, Malhar recrossed the Jamuna (end of December) and laid siege to Kunjpura plundering the country from Delhi upto Thaneswar.

This close approach of the Marathas to Sirhind greatly alarmed Abdus Samad Khan. He was at that time absent from his headquarters on a punitive expedition against Ala Singh who in concert with other Sikh Sardars had barred the path of Timur Shah at Sanawar and robbed him of half his treasures and again attacked and plundered him at Malerkotla. Abdus Samad Khan invaded Sunam in the territory of Ala Singh and imposed a fine on him.

Hearing of the agreement concluded between the Marathas and Adina Beg, Abdus Samad Khan quickly settled that business, hastened back to Sirhind and set himself to make preparations to face the danger of attack by the Marathas in concert with Adina and his Sikh allies. He collected army, repaired fort and dug defensive trenches round the city.

A month later, i.e. to say towards the end of February 1758, Maratha invasion began. Their main army under Raghunath and Malhar—whose strength swelled to two lakhs of men—reached Sirhind and laid siege to it while their raiding hands spread all over the district plundering the villages around. Adina Beg with his own troops and his Sikh allies crossed the Sutlej and joined the Marathas just near Sirhind.

After a few days' exchange of gunfire, Abdus Samad found his position untenable. Soon after he and Jangbaz Khan tried to

fly away but they were captured along with some other Afghan captains. Raghunath Rao treated them well. The Sikhs plundered Sirhind to their heart's content.<sup>1</sup> Marathas were the next to plunder the town. The Marathas regarded plunder as their exclusive privilege and were naturally jealous of them who had the lion's share in the loot of Sirhind. A skirmish took place between them but peace was soon brought about by Adina Beg. It was then agreed that to avoid clash between these two warring people, the Sikhs who numbered about fifteen thousand should always keep two stages ahead of the Marathas in their march upon Lahore.

Jahan Khan thought it prudent to retreat before the advancing combined forces of the Marathas, Adina Beg Khan and the Sikhs. When these forces reached in the neighbourhood of Lahore (April 18, 1758) it became impossible for Timur Shah and Jahan Khan to stay in Lahore. According to Dr. Ganda Singh, "The fort was out of repair and as the harvesting had not as yet begun, it was not sufficiently provisioned for any long-drawn siege. Moreover, he had no heavy pieces of artillery to keep the besiegers away for long. He had alienated the sympathies of the Sikh population, who were only waiting for a chance to drive him away. His Afghan and Persian troops numbered only a few thousand, and there was no hope of reinforcement from the Shah who was himself busy with the affairs of state at home. In these circumstances Prince Timur was not free from danger. Jahan Khan was then left with the only alternative of flying away to Afghanistan."<sup>2</sup>

Timur Shah and Jahan Khan fled from Lahore on the 18th April, 1758 and on the 19th April, Sikhs and Marathas entered Lahore. In his precipitate retreat, Timur left his baggage and even his artillery behind him, to be plundered by the invading army. The allies' forces could not cross the Chenab because of its high water level. They could not, therefore, pursue the Durranis upto Attock. The leading Sikh Sardars who took part in this campaign with ten to fifteen thousand of horsemen were Charat Singh Sukarchakia, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, Hari Singh, Lehna Singh,

1. The Marathas and the Sikhs so thoroughly looted Sirhind city that none of its inhabitants, high or low, male or female, had a cloth left on his person. Pulling the houses down, they carried off the timber and dug the floors up for buried money. (*Tarikh-i-Alamgir Sani*, 311; Selection from Peshwa's Daftar).

2. *Tabmas Nama*, 81-83; *Tarikh-i-Sultani*, p. 134.

Gujjar Singh and Jhanda Singh Bhangi. The Sikhs took the Afghan captives to Amritsar and forced them to clean the sacred tank filled up with rubbish by Jahan Khan. Ali-ud-Din says that among the visitors to Amritsar were the Maratha chiefs who paid their respects to the temple along with Sikh Sardars and were much honoured.<sup>1</sup>

Quite number of the writers of history including Malcolm Marshal, Bakht Mal, Khushwaqt Rai, Cunningham, Muhammad Latif, Rattan Singh Bhangu aver that the Sikhs alone expelled Timur Shah and Jahan Khan from Lahore. They declared their sovereignty and their leader Jassa Singh Ahluwalia struck coins in his own name to demonstrate this fact.

The averment, however, has no solid foundation. The writers vouchsafing that the sovereignty of the Khalsa was established, have based their judgement on the information collected by Brown for his India Tracts from two Punjabi Hindus who had in possession, accounts of the rise and progress of the Sikhs written in Nagari dialect. Whether the Hindus were eye-witness accounts and whether the accounts in their possession were historically correct, Brown himself was skeptical. In the introduction to Tract III-IV, he recorded that he found it then extremely defective in regular continuation of dates, and therefore, not deserving the status of a history.

In the face of this, the averment is rejected as being dubious statement especially when tangible evidence of the eye-witness Miskin and of the Marathas is available asserting that no coin was struck by the Sikhs or Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. There is, however, no denying the fact that the Sikhs did capture Lahore and their chief Jassa Singh did strike the coin. But all this happened in 1761, three years later and not in 1758.

### **Begam's Tragic Finale**

As it has been told earlier, during the fourth invasion Mughlani Begam rendered valuable help to Ahmad Shah who was extremely pleased at this and told her that hitherto he had styled her as his daughter but from this day he would call her as his son and gave her the title of 'Sultan Mirza'.

At this time, the prestige of the Begam touched its apex. At her request Durrani reinstated Imad-ul-Mulk (Ghazi-ud-Din), now

1. *Ibratnama*, p. 255.



the Begam's son-in-law in the office of the Wazir of Delhi and granted to the Begam herself, the Jullundur Doab, Jammu and Kashmir as a fief. But before Begam could assume administration of the same, the Durrani changed his mind and appointed his own son, Timur, as the Governor of Punjab and in-charge of all those territories. To her entreaties that the Durrani should not take away his promise, she got the simple reply, "Now that your brother Timur Shah is the viceroy there, what will you do with the provinces?" She had to return to Lahore completely dejected and fallen.

At Lahore, Begam had to suffer humiliation, Timur and his assistant Jahan Khan hated her. Jahan Khan had re-appointed Adina Beg as the faujdar of the Jullundur Doab on certain conditions, but shortly after, he asked Adina Beg to come himself in the court and make immediate payment of six lakhs of rupees. Adina sent his agent Dila Rai who was imprisoned by Jahan Khan who demanded immediate payment of Rs. 6,00,000. Mughlani Begam approached Jahan Khan and standing surety for the tribute demanded, secured the release of Adina's agent. Soon after, she, out of pity for him, set him free. Jahan Khan got infuriated at this, and having called her to his presence, started beating her with a rod.

She offered him her jewels worth the amount of the tribute demanded from Adina Beg. Her house was plundered and she was confined in a small room and subjected to severe oppression.

After the flight of Timur Shah to Afghanistan, the Marathas appointed Adina Beg as the viceroy of the Punjab. He appointed his son-in-law, Khwaja Mirza Khan as in-charge of the capital and he himself transferred his headquarters to Batala. The Begam was also removed thither (May to September 1758) where Adina Beg treated her and her servants with utmost consideration. She was given liberal grants and once again she began to lead a life of ease and luxury. According to Miskin, her conduct was not above reproach and as we are told by the same author she once tried to seduce him who was a robust, handsome and bewitching youth of eighteen years. When Miskin resisted her temptations, she imprisoned him and released him only when the matter became known to all and even Adina sent her a word against subjecting her devoted servant to such ill-treatment.<sup>1</sup>

---

1. *Tazkirah-i-Miskin*, 1780, p. 181.

Adina Beg died on the 15th September 1758. The Begam went to Jammu where Ranjit Dev treated her with courtesy and consideration. He was approached by some disaffected chiefs of Kashmir to march against Sukh Jiwan, the governor of the valley. The Begam did make some preparations, but she never took up the project.

Upto this time, the Begam had been reduced to the position of a pauper. In 1760 when Abdali invaded India for the fifth time, he learnt how she had been reduced to extreme poverty. He granted her the revenue of Sialkot which amounted to Rs. 30,000 a year. Early in 1761 the Begam developed intimacy with Shahbaz Khan, an eunuch. Soon, the illicit relation of the Begam began to be talked about in the bazars of Jammu and she thought it prudent to leave the city for Samba, thirty miles from Jammu. Here she entered regular matrimonial alliance with Shahbaz Khan and passed the rest of her life as his wife. Begam died in A.D. 1779.

## Chapter 8

# ADINA BEG AND MARATHA SUPREMACY IN THE PUNJAB

### Adina Beg as Viceroy of the Punjab

Adina Beg Khan's story is a story of one of the persons who rose from obscurity into the full blaze of historical renown in the eighteenth century. He did not belong to a renowned family, nor was he brought up with a silver spoon in his mouth. His parents were very poor. His father, Channu, was an *Arain* by caste which, in the social scale of his contemporary world, did not weigh very heavy. His birth took place at Sharaqpur, a town on the bank of the river Ravi, 28 km from Lahore. His exact date of birth is unknown; probably he was born at the opening of the eighteenth century.

As he crossed childhood, he sought employment in the households of different Mughal officers in which capacity he served for quite a long time. He spent most of his time at Jalalabad, Khanpur and Bajwara all situated in the Jullundur Doab. This was the beginning of his life-long association with this part of the Punjab.

When Adina grew to manhood, the genius in him made him restive and he began to aspire for a life of strenuous action.

Accordingly, he joined the army. He was, however, soon disillusioned of his new career with its poor prospects and left it for a more profitable post of revenue collector of village Kang in Sultanpur district of Jullundur Doab. He displayed great energy, courage and force of character in the performance of his new duties.

His ability and tact won him many friends, one of whom was Sri Niwas, a rich banker of Sultanpur, a very influential man, who in a few years obtained for Adina Beg, the revenue contract of five or six villages in the territory of Kang. In the following year, all the villages of Kang circle passed to his charge.

Adina's appointment to the aforesaid post stimulated his energies and re-kindled his ambition.

Adina Beg Khan deposited his revenues regularly. The district officer was so much impressed by his loyalty and ability that he sometimes deputed him to Lahore to deposit the district revenues with provincial treasury. In this way, Adina got opportunities to gain influence in the court of Lahore.

The district officer of Sultanpur died. A very bold idea struck him. He went to Lahore, managed to secure an interview with Zakariya Khan who was deeply impressed by his demeanour. The latter demanded security for his good behaviour which was immediately provided by Lala Sri Niwas of Sultanpur and Adina Beg was appointed to the post of the District Officer of Sultanpur (A.D. 1739). He repaid his debt of gratitude which he owed to Sri Niwas by appointing him his immediate assistant and his elder brother Bhawani Das as the superintendent of his office.

Soon after, Nadir Shah invaded India. On his way to Delhi from Lahore, he sacked Sultanpur and its adjoining areas. Moreover, the state of confusion as it was caused by the Persian invasion provided opportunities to the astute Sikhs to start their depredations with the result that confusion became more precipitate.

After the retirement of Nadir Shah from India, Adina put his heart and soul into the work of the reconstruction of his district. As a result, normalcy was restored to it and Adina Beg began to be appreciated in all quarters.

Zakariya Khan who was responsible for restoring stability to the whole of the province was much worried about the condition of Jullundur Doab, which was peopled by Jats who had sympathy with the Sikhs. He, on his part, did lead expeditions against them, but to achieve results, constant vigil was needed and for that, he was in search of a capable governor for the territory.

His choice fell on Adina Beg Khan as it was thought that the man who had succeeded in restoring order in the district of Sultanpur which was the worst victim of Nadir Shah's troops would also do well when given a chance to operate on a vaster scale. The viceroy also knew that Adina Beg, besides being active and energetic, had the personal knowledge of the Doab. So he was promoted to the high rank of Nazim of the Jullundur Doab in 1739 and was charged with the duty of chastising the Sikhs.

As a Nazim too, Adina Beg acquitted himself very well. Peace

was established in the Doab within a short time. He, however, did not take severe measures against the Sikhs. The reason for this was that this time it was a diplomat rather than an administrator that was at work in Adina. It seems that he wished to secure his position by keeping the Sikh menace alive; otherwise he feared that in case of perfect peace in the Doab, this territory might be leased to somebody else for a larger sum of revenue. Dewan Bakht Mal testifies to the fact in his book *Khalsa Nama*, he says :

"Adina Beg was passionately greedy. He did not crush the Sikhs, although he could do, had he intended. But he had this idea in his mind, that if he quelled the Sikhs, some other tax-farmer might be entrusted with the government of the Doab for a higher sum and he might be deprived of his post. This attitude of the Adina helped the Sikhs to grow stronger and gradually occupied many villages as Jagirs."<sup>1</sup>

Zakariya Khan, however, would not rest content until he saw the Sikhs out of his province. He issued strict orders to Adina Beg to drive them away. Adina had to act. He asked the Sikhs to vacate the territory. On receiving this order, the Sikhs deputed Jassa Singh Ramgarhia to settle terms with Adina. The latter, however, proved too clever for the Sikh wakil and succeeded in persuading him to accept office under his government.

The Sikhs were shocked at the conduct of their envoy and found safety in their flight to the Sirhind Division of Delhi province, where they created a serious situation for the Imperial Government.

For some time, things moved on smoothly; but then circumstances worked against him. Zakariya Khan, being hard-pressed by financial difficulties imprisoned Diwan Lakhpat Rai for his failure to make payment to his troops. The Diwan's brother Jaspat Rai secured orders from Zakariya Khan to check the accounts of government officials and to call for arrears. The money poured in but the checking of accounts continued unabated.

In course of time came the turn of Adina Beg who had also withheld and failed in making payment to the Lahore government. Fully aware that the wrath of the Diwan was bound to fall upon him, he immediately went to Lahore and waited upon Lakhpat Rai alone at night to apologise to him. The Diwan did not listen to

---

1. *Khalsa Nama*, p. 58-9. Also refer to *India Tracts*, II, p. 14.

him and imprisoned him along with his assistant, Bhawani Das and Nidhan Singh. Shah Nawaz Khan, the younger son of Zakariya Khan was given charge of the Jullundur Doab.

They remained in prison for a year. Then Bhawani Das was released on the security of his elder brother, Sri Niwas. Just at this time, Adina escaped from the prison and went to a hide-out in the hills. Bhawani Das was at once captured, tortured and put into a large pot and half-boiled<sup>1</sup>; but even then he did not yield. Lakhpat Rai was so much moved with the loyalty of Bhawani Das that he set him free and asked him to beg a favour. Bhawani Das requested the reinstatement of Adina Beg Khan which was immediately done and Adina Beg was appointed to the deputy governorship under Shah Nawaz Khan. It was not long, before he was able to win the complete confidence of Shah Nawaz Khan and the entire administration of the Doab fell to his control once again.

Zakariya died in July 1745. A war of succession arose between his sons, Yahiya Khan and Shah Nawaz Khan. His eldest son, Yahiya Khan, being the son-in-law of Qamr-ud-Din, the Delhi Wazir, succeeded in becoming the governor of the Punjab. Shah Nawaz Khan, not being content with the governorship of Jullundur Doab, was determined to create troubles for Yahiya Khan.

Adina Beg Khan now found himself placed politically under Yahiya Khan who had no control over Shah Nawaz Khan and in order to maintain his sway over the Jullundur Doab which was the most fertile part of the Punjab, Yahiya Khan treated Adina Beg Khan with great consideration. Adina Beg Khan played his part so cautiously and consummately that he won the trust of Yahiya Khan, retaining at the same time the confidence of Shah Nawaz Khan, though the brothers were openly hostile to each other. He gave proof of his loyalty by persecuting the Sikhs. Then Lakhpat Rai carried on a hard campaign against them from April to June 1746.

Ultimately, however, when he saw the scales turning against Yahiya Khan, he openly sided with Shah Nawaz Khan and led an attack against his enemy at Lahore in March 1747, winning him a victory. Yahiya was captured and Shah Nawaz Khan became the

1. *Abwal-e-Adina Beg Khan*, 53a; *Imad-us-Saadat* 107b; Bute Shah on folio 242b states that it was Adina Beg Khan who was boiled in a kettle-drum by Zakariya Khan.



governor of Lahore. Now Shah Nawaz Khan gave complete charge of Jullundur Doab to Adina Beg.

Delhi Wazir was utterly disappointed at these developments at Lahore, but he hesitated to take drastic action because he first wanted to secure the release of his son-in-law, Yahiya Khan who in case of the despatch of a force might be put to death. Soon after, Yahiya Khan managed to escape to Delhi with the connivance of Dardana Begam, the sister of Zakariya Khan and wife of Jani Khan. Now Shah Nawaz felt extremely perturbed and felt sure that the retribution of the Emperor and his Wazir must fall upon them. Consequently, he turned his mind in all directions to secure support. At this juncture, the political horizon of India was suddenly overcast with clouds. Ahmad Shah Abdali after the conquest of Kabul and Qandhar and the territory up to Peshawar, had made a plan to attack India. With Peshawar as a suitable base, the man-power of Afghanistan behind him and no hindrance in front, India became his object.

At this juncture, Adina Beg advised Shah Nawaz Khan to communicate with Ahmad Shah Abdali. Accordingly, he sent his envoy to Ahmad Shah Abdali with the message, "crown to Ahmad Shah and Wazirship to Shah Nawaz." He also declared himself a convert to Shia religion and in his official seal replaced the names of the Mughal Emperors by the twelve Imams with a view to win the favour of the Persian soldiery of Ahmad Shah.

In the meanwhile, Adina Beg showed no compunction in trying to stab his master in the back. He secretly informed the Delhi authorities of the impending designs of Shah Nawaz Khan. The Wazir was very much perturbed at this news and he at once wrote to Shah Nawaz Khan a conciliatory and affectionate letter saying that "their family at all times attached to the Emperors of India had never been defiled by the crime of ingratitude and treason. It is a pity that a man like you should wish honour of obeying Ahmad Shah Abdali, Yasowal, rather than that of driving such a fellow from the frontiers of Hindustan and the five provinces of Kabul, Kashmir, Thatta, Multan and Lahore would then come under his own jurisdiction, and, in this, the whole Empire with all its resources will be at his back."

The fear of being labelled as a traitor and the hope of a bright future touched the youngman's heart. He prepared to oppose the invader whom a little while before he had invited.

On the 11th January, 1748, a fierce contest took place

between the forces of Abdali and those of Shah Nawaz Khan. Shah Nawaz Khan was defeated and fled to Delhi. Adina Beg accompanied him.

The indolent Mughal court at last was moved and the Emperor despatched a huge army of two lakhs under Wazir Qamrud-Din Khan to check the advance of Abdali. On 11th March, 1748, a battle was fought at Manupur. Wazir Qamrud-Din Khan was killed but his son, Muin-ul-Mulk, popularly known as Mir Mannu defeated Ahmad Shah's army which fled back to Afghanistan. Adina Beg Khan was in close attendance on Mir Mannu and was twice wounded in the battle.

After the battle of Haripur, Mir Mannu assumed the governorship of Lahore. He confirmed Adina Beg Khan in the faujdari of the Jullundur Doab.

Having established himself at Lahore by June 1748, Mannu despatched punitive expeditions in pursuit of the Sikhs who out of fear of the hero of Manupur retreated, before his contingents. At the same time, Adina Beg Khan was given strict instructions to curb the power of the Sikhs who had become supreme in the northern hilly portions of the Doab. Adina had to be active against the Sikhs, although in his heart of hearts he never wished a complete break off with them, whom he proposed to use for the fulfilment of his own designs. Even then, willy nilly he had to lead an expedition against them and in the engagements which followed, both the parties lost heavily, the Sikhs alone leaving about 600 dead on the battlefield. Adina in view of the superior number of the Sikh forces had to give up the struggle. He returned to Jullundur, his headquarter, and sought help from Mannu. In the meantime, the rains had set in and all further operations were suspended.

After the rainy season was over, the Sikhs assembled at Amritsar to celebrate Diwali. They put their five hundred picked men in the fort of Ram Rauni and began to celebrate their festival. Mannu taking advantage of the situation ordered Adina to march against them. The Sikhs, on their part, were quite vigilant, garrisoned their mud fort, Ram Rauni, with five hundred picked men while many of them had hid themselves in the forest nearby to render support.

Adina Beg blockaded Ram Rauni and the battle started. The Sikhs occasionally, sallied out and created a havoc in Adina's ranks. But, in course of time, the Sikh garrison dwindled to three hundred

who were also not very hopeful for any success. At this critical juncture, they sent a word to Jassa Singh Thoka who was in the service of Adina to help them and if he did not render any help, he would be ostracized and never readmitted into the fold of the Khalsa. Jassa Singh, in consideration of his co-religionists, deserted Adina Beg and entered the fort at night. From there, he wrote to Kaura Mal who had sympathy for the cause of the Sikhs to prevail upon Mir Mannu to lift the siege so that the three hundred lives might be saved.

Kaura Mal successfully pleaded the cause of the Sikhs. Mannu, as desired by the Diwan changed his strategy. He contemplated 'to stitch the mouth of a dog with morsels'. He granted them one fourth of the revenue of the parganah of Patti and came back to Lahore. The siege was raised and three hundred lives were saved.

Adina Beg Khan, however, was much chagrined. Unbounded ambitions as he had got, he could not tolerate the existence of Kaura Mal, a formidable personality and superior to him in diplomacy and political art. This being his mental framework, he was always on the look-out to ruin Kaura Mal.

The opportunity came when Abdali invaded India for the third time. The Durrani entered the Punjab in December, 1751 and besieged Lahore for four months. Neither Abdali for want of artillery nor Muin for lack of reinforcement from Delhi could make short work of this long affair. The whole country around Lahore within a radius of 80 km. was entirely laid waste by the Afghans with the result that extreme scarcity of grain prevailed in the camps of both the armies.

At this juncture, Mannu called a council of war. Kaura Mal opined that the Nawab's troops were mostly raw levies and were no match in the open for the hardy warriors of the north-west, that the country for miles around had been ruined and therefore Abdali's camp was also short of provisions and that shortly afterwards hot weather would set in and Abdali's troops finding the sun intolerable, would either return or attack them at disadvantage.

This was the wisest plan but Adina Beg who was always opposed to Kaura Mal from policy, pleaded immediate action. The viceroy prompted by his own ardour and courage adopted the course suggested by Adina.<sup>1</sup>

1. *Khazana-i-Amire*, 98; *Farbat-un-Nazirin*, Elliot, viii 44.

In the battle of Mahmud Buti near Lahore when Kaura Mal faced the enemy and the entire fortune of Mannu depended upon his failure or success, Adina advised Mannu to call back the Diwan and detachment of his troops so that a joint attack might be made on the enemy. Kaura Mal pleaded that if he withdrew, it would be considered a sign of retreat by the enemy and the entire mass of his soldier would thus be massacred. Mannu, however, insisted on his coming back and sent strict orders to the effect.

As the Diwan left his position, it happened what was expected. The enemy immediately opened an attack, causing a lot of confusion among the ranks of Diwan. Even then, the Diwan succeeded in restoring order among his men. Encouraged by Kaura Mal's presence, his soldiers gave a determined fight to the enemy and began to push them back. As this process started, the Diwan's elephant fell on the ground. The Diwan was trying to mount another elephant belonging to Mir Nehmat Khan, Adina at once gave a signal to Bazid Khan Kasuria who killed him by firing at him. Just this time, a Durrani marched forward and cutting off the Diwan's head carried it away. Shortly after, Mannu surrendered. Ahmad Shah pardoned him and confirmed him as the governor of Lahore.

After the war, when matters returned to normal, reports of Sikh ravages began to pour into Lahore from all parts of the country. Mir Mannu ordered Adina Beg Khan to proceed against the Sikhs. Adina in conjunction with Sadiq Beg Khan moved to accomplish the task. According to Dr. H.R. Gupta, "Adina Beg hailed the opportunity to wash away the suspicions attached to his treachery at Lahore during the recent campaigning of the Durrani." Both the commanders marched from Lahore with a strong force. They received the intelligence that the Sikhs had assembled near Makhawal probably to celebrate the Baisakhi festival. The Sikhs, at this time, were sure that since Durrani had laid siege to Lahore, neither he nor Mir Mannu were free to turn their attention to them. Thus they engrossed themselves in festivities.

Adina Beg and Sadiq Beg Khan suddenly fell on them. Since it was an attack unexpected by the Sikhs, a good number of them were killed. But soon after, Adina Beg Khan entered into secret understanding with them. Malcolm writes :

"Adina was an artful chief who considered this turbulent tribe in no other light than as the means of his personal

advancement. He was careful not to reduce them altogether, but after defeating them in an action which was fought near Makhowal, he entered into a secret understanding with them, by which, though their executions were limited, they enjoyed a security to which they had been unaccustomed, and from which they gathered strength and resources for future efforts."

But, just to keep Mannu in good humour he would send 40 or 50 Sikh captives from the Jullundur Doab who were as a rule killed with wooden hammers.<sup>1</sup> In 1752, Adina established a town near Gurdaspur and named after him, Adinapur.

After the death of Mir Mannu, confusion raged at Lahore. Governors changed hands one after another and the rivals clashed. Adina Beg Khan took full advantage of the situation and established his independence in the Jullundur Doab owing his allegiance neither to Delhi nor to Kabul. He increased his resources and strengthened his position with the result that he was the only man who succeeded in maintaining peace and order in the country under his charge. But he did not have smooth sailing for long.

Qutab Khan with Najib-ud-Daula joined the Emperor's troops in the battle between Prince Ahmad Shah and Safdar Jang. He was given the parganas of Kairana, Barot, Sardhan and Kandhla by way of pay. These territories were afterwards given to the Marathas by Wazir Imad-ul-Mulk. Qutab Khan felt exasperated at the loss of his Jagirs and took to plunder of the areas of Sonapat, Panipat, Karnal and marched upon Sirhind after defeating Imperial forces at Karnal. Sadiq Beg Khan, the governor of Sirhind, approached Adina Beg for help. In the mean time, Qutab Khan seized Sirhind (1755).

Adina could illbrook the presence of such a formidable foe in his close neighbourhood. He collected an army of 50,000 horse and equal number of foot and marched to the Ghat opposite Rupar. His army included even the followers of Nanak. An engagement took place between the parties on the 11th April, 1755. Qutab Khan, Jamal Khan and other chiefs of the army lost their lives and Adina Beg Khan was victorious.

After this, Adina Beg took over the administration of Sirhind and its dependencies and brought the country upto Shahbad, Thanesar, Ghuram, Mansurpur and Mustafabad, into his possession.

---

1. Dr. H.R. Gupta, *Studies in Later Mughal History of the Punjab*.



The Wazir, knowing his own military weakness, gave up the idea of advancing and confirmed Adina Beg as the governor of these territories also. According to Dr. H.R. Gupta, "The Delhi Emperor conferred upon him the coveted title of Zafar Jang Bahadur, and all the hill chiefs including Saif Ali Khan of Kangra submitted to him and paid tribute."

After this, Adina turned his attention to Lahore, where Khwaja Abdullah, on account of his misrule and misdeeds, had become very unpopular. Adina drove him out and appointed Sadiq Beg Khan, his deputy, to manage state affairs.

The Begam felt much perturbed at the turn of events. She informed Ahmad Shah Abdali of all this who despatched Jahan Khan with two special contingents to set the matters right. Sadiq Beg fled to Sirhind about December, 1755 and the Begam was restored to Subedari with Khwaja Abdullah as her deputy.

By this time, Adina suffered another reverse. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, the celebrated leader of Dal Khalsa, gained a victory over Adina in the battle of Khadur and compelled the Khan to cede to him Fatehabad on the Beas.

In the meanwhile, Mughlani Begam, chafing under Abdullah at Lahore, resolved to regain full power through the Delhi Government. She, therefore, contacted Imad-ul-Mulk, the Wazir at Delhi. This man was quite near to Begam because he was betrothed to her daughter. He at once agreed. In fact, he, apart from helping Begam, wanted to enrich himself with the wealth of Lahore also. He alongwith Prince Ali Gauhar reached Sirhind on the 7th February, 1756. He had not declared explicitly what he arrived at. Adina Beg, who had uncanny sense, at once judged the real intentions of Imad-ul-Mulk. He wrote to him to send one commander with two or three thousand troops, promising to add his own contingent to them and to secure him possession of Lahore. The Wazir agreed to his proposal and sent Naseem Khan with nearly three thousand troops to Adina Beg.

Adina Beg sent Sadiq Beg Khan with 10000 troops of his own and all these soldiers arrived at Lahore within a few days. Khwaja Abdullah Khan, the governor of Lahore guessed that he would be captured shortly afterwards and being frightened left the city and fled away to Jammu. Mughlani Begam took the reins of government in her hands once more. She sent her daughter Umda Begam alongwith a suitable dowry to the camp of the Wazir on the 4th March, 1756 at Sirhind where the marriage ceremony was



duly performed.

Shortly after, the Wazir secured the person of the Begam and took her with him to Delhi. The Wazir appointed Adina Beg as the governor of Lahore and Multan on a tribute of Rs. thirty lakhs a year, appointed Sayyad Jamil-ud-Din Khan to Lahore as Adina's assistant and afterwards returned to the Imperial capital on the 9th May, 1756.

Sayyad Jamil-ud-Din administered the province well, but his rule was short. Khwaja Abdullah went to Qandhar and brought back a strong force before which the Sayyad retired from Lahore and joined Adina Beg in the Jullundur Doab. Khwaja Ubaid-Ullah again began to govern the Punjab as a nominee of the Afghan ruler, Ahmad Shah Durrani. Mughlani Begam did not like the treatment which she had been receiving at the hands of the Wazir. She addressed some secret letters to Ahmad Shah Abdali inviting him to invade India who partly in response to her invitations and partly in response to the requests of Najib-ud-Daula agreed. He reached Peshawar in November 1756. None offered any resistance to him. Adina Beg fled first to Hansi and then to Khali Balwan in the Kangra hills. Durrani reached Delhi and plundered it wholeheartedly. Mughlani rendered him valuable help. She was responsible for procuring him the hoarded treasure of all the court nobles of Delhi by telling him the exact amount of wealth in their possession.

Pleased with her, Ahmad Shah granted her Jullundur Doab, Jammu and Kashmir as a fief. She appointed one of her relations, Khwaja Ibrahim Khan, to the government of Kashmir, confirmed the Raja of Jammu in the administration on her behalf and invited Adina Beg Khan to take over the charge of the Jullundur Doab. Soon, the Ahmad rescinded his decision. He appointed his own son, Timur Shah as the governor of Lahore. Timur through a separate *firman* offered Adina the governorship of the Doab and the area upto Sutlej. Adina Beg hesitated, for some time, to accept the viceroyalty from Timur, but then he assumed the administration on the condition that it would not be obligatory upon him to attend the Lahore court. Adina could not pull on with the Afghans for long. He invited the Sikhs and the Marathas to his help. They expelled the Afghans from the Punjab.

After the flight of Timur Shah and his commander-in-chief, Jahan Khan, the Marathas appointed Adina Beg as governor of the Punjab. Raghunath Rao, the Peshwa's brother and the incharge of

the expeditionary force to the Punjab realized that it was not possible for the Marathas to hold the Punjab with a Deccani garrison in face of the rising power of the Sikhs, who were then issuing out of their hill recesses and spreading over the country in all directions. Moreover, the weak financial position of the central Maratha government at Poona also did not warrant the aforesaid step. Besides this, the Deccanics, born and brought up in mild climate, were not in a position to stand the rigours of the burning heat and freezing cold of the Punjab. In view of this he very correctly understood that the only means of keeping the Punjab in nominal allegiance to the Maratha Power and getting any revenue out of it, was to entrust it to Adina Beg who had a very old understanding with the Sikhs and had long experience of administering the country. Accordingly Raghunath Rao gave the viceroyalty of the Punjab to Adina Beg on the condition that he would pay an annual tribute of 75 lakhs of rupees.<sup>1</sup>

Adina Beg Khan appointed Khwaja Mirza Jan Khan as his Naib, or deputy governor. He himself continued to stay in his headquarter in Doaba Bist Jullundur. Raghunath Rao left Lahore on May 10, 1758 and marched towards Delhi. He placed Sadiq Beg Khan incharge of Sirhind.

Adina Beg started his rule in an environment where he could feel that he was very powerful and strong. The Delhi Government had become decrepit and weak. He enjoyed the umbrella of the Marathas who were always prepared to help him in case of foreign aggression. In view of all this, he could act freely and without any encumbrances.

Immediately after the assumption of power, he threw himself heart and soul into the task of reconstructing the ruined country and restoring confidence among the people. Merchants and agriculturists were encouraged to take their respective avocations without any fear. He gave peace to the province.

He, however, did not initiate any administrative reform. He did not effect any revenue settlement; he simply got collected the revenue through Amirs. His administrative machinery consisted of a few officials, allowed to work as per their whims as long as they accepted the hegemony of Adina Beg Khan. In the department of justice undoubtedly Muslim law was expected to be followed; but, not unoften, whims of the Khan were given preference to the law.

1. *Delhi Chronicle*, 156; *Selections from Peshwa's Daftar*, xxviii, 218.

The greatest problem of Adina Beg was to remove the Sikh desperados. He, therefore, contacted them and advised them to settle down as peaceful citizens. But the Sikhs had their ambitions to realize and Adina Beg was bound to face a determined resistance on this front.

Adina Beg knew pretty well how to strike at them. He had an army of 10000 horse and foot. To strengthen himself against the Sikhs he called upon the noted Zamindars and the chiefs to join him to combat the Sikh menace. Consequently the Gakhars, the Jhanjhua and the Gheba Zamindars of the Sind Sagar Doab, Chaudhari Rahmat Khan Waraich in the Chaj Doab, Raja Ranjit Dev of Jammu, Chaudhari Pir Muhammad Chatha, Izzat Bakhsh, Muran Bakhsh Bhatti and other Zamindars in the Rachna Doab, Raja Ghummand Chand, Nidhan Singh Randhawa, Mirza Muhammad Anwar of Qadian, the Afghans of Kasur and Dhawalpur in the Bari Doab, the Afghans of Jullundur and Alawalpur, Rai Ibrahim of Kapurthala, the Rais of Bankala, Dasua, Khardunbala and Phagwara and the Rajputs of Rahon in the Jullundur Doab were persuaded to join him in his campaign.

The Sikhs on their part were awake to the activities of Adina Beg, their old ally and new foe. They, in order to spring surprise on him, appeared in the neighbourhood of Adina Nagar, a new township 130 Kms. north of Lahore founded by him in his own name. Adina Beg despatched Diwan Hira Mal and Guru Aqil Das of Jandiala to crush the Sikhs. The Sikhs retired to Qadian where a sanguine battle was fought in which the enemies of the Sikhs were defeated. Diwan Hira Mal<sup>1</sup> was killed and his soldiers fled.

Adina Beg Khan was utterly shocked. He made still more preparations and sent Mirza Aziz against them. He also entrusted him with one thousand carpenters with steel hatchets and axes for the purpose of cutting down and clearing away the jungles and forests where the Sikhs used to seek shelter so that no hiding place might exist for the people of Khalsa dispensation. The Sikhs showed no alarm. A large number of them had collected under the leadership of Nand Singh of Sanghania to have a dip in the sacred tank at Amritsar. Jai Singh Kanhiya and various other Sardars were also among them. On hearing that the enemy was fast approaching, they shut themselves up in the Ram Rauni fort. The enemy besieged the fort. The Sikhs led sorties and inflicted serious

1. Ali-ud-Din, *Ibratnama*, p. 257.

losses on the enemy, who was equally determined to capture the fort. Ultimately Mirza Aziz Bakhsh succeeded in worming hole in a wall of the fort. The Sikhs dashed out in small numbers and fell upon the enemy. Many of them lost their lives while others escaped<sup>1</sup> to the Malwa region.

Here also they were allowed no respite the territory was in the Sirhind Division, where Sadiq Beg Khan was the governor. No sooner had the Sikhs crossed the Sutlej, than Sadiq Beg under instructions from Adina, engaged them in the action near the village Sanghulan. The governor's swivels opened a heavy fire on the Sikhs and it created a havoc on their ranks. They were forced to run away for their lives, leaving their camp and baggage by the enemy.

The Sikhs were given a hot pursuit by Sadiq's troops. They had gone only 7 or 8 kms away when they returned suddenly to fall upon the heavy guns which Sadiq's troops had left behind unguarded. Sadiq Beg again led an attack upon the Sikhs, who under heavy artillery fire, left the field and reached Daroli to regroup with their brethren.<sup>1</sup> The Sikhs suffered a lot in this engagement but they could not be crushed. Forty years of continuous persecution had seasoned them for a nomadic life of hardship and it was not easy to crush such people.

The old fox (Adina Beg) had been the secret ally of the Sikhs who, to further his own schemes of ambitions against his co-religionists, had been unconsciously helping the cause of the Sikhs. Towards the end of his life when he thought he had removed all the obstacles on his way—the Afghans and the Marathas—he began to pull down the very scaffolding with which he had raised himself. He made up his mind to crush the Sikhs, but he was too late. The Sikhs were no longer the mere refugees haunted from place to place at the whims of the rulers. They had become real power in the land without whose co-operation no body could establish his rule. As the preparations to annihilate the Khalsa went apace, he fell suddenly ill with colic and after suffering for a few days died at Batala on 15th September, 1758.<sup>3</sup>

1. Ahmad Shah Batalia, *Tarikh-i-Hind*, p. 416.

2. Rattan Singh Bhangu, *Prachin Panth Parkash*, p. 425-427.

Gian Singh, *Shamsber Khalsa*, p. 97.

3. A Marathi letter in *Selections from Peshwa's Daftar*, ii, 96, dated 7-10-1758, places it on the 12th Muharram (14th September); *Farhat-un-Nazirin*; in Elliot vii, 169; Assigns 11th Muharram (14th September). ◀

His remains were interred at Khanpur in the Jullundur Doab near Hoshiarpur. With his passing away, the only capable governor of the Punjab after Muin was lost. For the Sikhs, however, his death was a blessing because now they were comparatively free to promote their interests. In a sense, Adina was also lucky in his death, because the overwhelming forces of Ahmad Shah Abdali which invaded India one year later and which shattered the Maratha power at the battle of Panipat would have been first directed against him to punish him for driving Timur Shah from the Punjab.

Adina Beg appeared to be possessing high profile expertise to survive and to keep himself in the saddle even in the midst of acute turmoil. Yet he was bereft of a long vision and requisite capability to impede the march of the Sikh Tornado toward battering and demolishing the old order. He was joyed that he was clever enough to use the Sikhs for his selfish ends. But he failed to perceive that the Sikh help to him was a part of their political gameplan whose thrust was to sharpen the contradictions among the ruling class. Adina succeeded in his design, while the Sikhs succeeded in causing the cleavages between different groups of the ruling elites. The net result was that the Sikh movement's flow could not be checked, rather it grew in speed and volume.

### **Evaluation of Adina Beg Khan's Achievements**

Adina's career gives an impression that he was extremely ambitious, awfully selfish and artfully crafty. Self-interest was the dominating note of his career. To cater to his self-interest, he would resort to any stratagem, even deceit. He did not feel any compunction while advising Shah Nawaz Khan to invite the Durrani and yet secretly reporting against him to Delhi for his impending designs. He invited the Marathas against Prince Timur, and yet secretly wrote to him that he was joining the Maratha invaders only as a matter of policy and not out of any conviction. He owed a lot to Mir Mannu and yet secretly designed to destroy Diwan Kaura Mal, a close associate of Mir Mannu and a great general.

The dexterous duplicity which Adina displayed, evoked

---

■ A contemporary Delhi Chronicler in *Tarikh-i-Sani*, 359, followed by J.N. Sarkar, II, 77 says that the death took place on 10th Safar (13th October). This date is apparently wrong. If Adina Beg died on October 13, how could the Marathi letter dated 7-10-1758 have stated the event.



awesome praise. This thing was particularly manifest in his relations with the Sikhs. He made friends with the Sikh leaders of the day, but it was all politically motivated friendship.

He would utilize them when he deemed it fit and turn his back on them when they did not serve his purpose. Occasions did arise when he could crush the Sikhs but, on the political chess-board, he always found them an integral part of his strategy to climb the ladder to political heights, and, this being so, he treated them tactfully. The interests of the provincial governor, or that of his Delhi masters or Afghans never gripped his mind which was always fixed on his personal gains.

But these things did not deprive him to be considered as a wise man. Those were the days when the decadent Mughal Empire was heading towards catastrophe; the Emperor had been reduced to a cipher; the court had divided itself into coteries; the strategically important provinces such as Multan and Lahore were having no stability. The environment was salubrious for any adventurer to come up and establish an independent principality. The things like 'Mughal Empire' or 'Indian Empire' were beyond the thinking of the contemporaries. Under such circumstances if Adina Beg did not attend to any higher principles of polity or society, he did the right thing. Had he acted otherwise, he at best had been labelled as a man groping in the world of imagination without having any touch with the stark reality.

He did the right thing when he successfully held the balance between the Delhi Emperor, Ahmad Shah Durrani, the Sikhs and the Marathas. He was always ready to intrigue with any power that appeared likely to prove useful to him. While the fortunes of other officials rose and fell with the change of government either at Delhi or at Lahore, Adina Beg Khan enjoyed an almost permanent position. He played a cautious part throughout, particularly in his relations with the Lahore viceroys. "He cleverly used gifts, arms and favours and often employed a mixture of threat and promise, gratification and persecution, as it suited the circumstances in order to amuse and subdue the Sikhs. He purchased their favour and service when too weak to coerce them, sought their help by conceding all their demands when he wanted to regain the government; and persecuted them when he found himself well-established and strong enough to do so.<sup>1</sup> A Muslim writer has paid a just tribute to Adina Beg Khan in these words,

1. Dr. H.R. Gupta, *Studies in Later Mughal History of the Punjab*.



"The Sikhs he amused, the Delhi court he despised, the Afghans he bewildered, and the Marathas he effectually influenced in his favour to break the power of both the Sikhs and the Afghans and to obtain his own independence. His approach to the political problems was pragmatic devoid of any lofty moral principles."

He possessed great administrative ability. He governed well at a time when anarchy and confusion were prevailing not only in the Punjab, but also in the whole of the Mughal Empire. He was very particular about revenue collection. He did not tolerate any default in this respect. Recalcitrance on the part of landlords was severely punished. The villages of defaulters were often plundered and sometimes reduced to ashes. He, however, did not restore land settlement of the Great Mughals, nor did he introduce any new one. The revenue collector took what he could from the cultivators.

In spite of his best efforts, Adina Beg Khan, at times, faced with a deficit. Once he was in great financial difficulty. He knew that there was a rich Gosain physician in the hills under his jurisdiction. He pretended indisposition, and sent for the physician. The Gosain told him that he was suffering from no disease. Adina Beg told him that he was suffering from the shortage of money. The physician caught the hint and could secure his release only after offering him two dishes full of gold coins.

In the department of justice, Muslim Law was applied as a rule; but the recorded cases show that it could easily be dispensed with and matter could be decided according to the whims of the Khan. The procedure followed was no less summary. One day in Jullundur city, when he was passing before the house of a Qazi, he saw ground poppy lying outside. He imposed a fine of Rs. 30,000 for defying the law of Quran.<sup>1</sup>

Adina Beg Khan did not suffer from loose-morals—the vice which was common among the ruling classes of the time. His life was marked for restraint, but there were occasions, of course very few, when he crossed the limits and became absolutely whimsical. *Abwal-i-Adina Beg Khan* narrates that one day, during a meal, he expressed a desire for jam. A servant immediately went to a grocer at Jullundur to procure it. The shopkeeper pretended not to possess it. Adina sent another man with two rupees. He got the jam and brought it. Adina flew into rage and ordered that the grocer should be boiled alive as jam was boiled by him. The man

1. Refer to *Abwal-i-Adina Beg Khan*, p. 59a.

could be saved with great difficulty through the intercession of Adina's guests.

A perusal of *Abwal-i-Adina Beg Khan*<sup>1</sup> shows that Adina did not marry and hence he had no issue. The statement is absolutely wrong. In a Marathi letter, very explicitly has it been given that Adina's son paid the arrear of the tribute of his father to Datta Ji Sindhia who lay encamped at Machhiwara in April 1759. According to a contemporary source of information, *Tarikh-i-Alamgir Sani*, Adina Beg Khan married his daughter to Khwaja Mirza Khan. The author of *Khazan-i-Amira* states that on Adina Beg's death, the Marathas appointed Adina's widow to the governorship of the Jullundur Doab. Similarly Sayyad Ghulam Hussain says that Adina Beg Khan left behind him a widow and a son who fled to Delhi in October 1759.

### Direct Rule of the Marathas in the Punjab

At Adina Beg's death, Wazir Ghazi-ud-Din proposed to send Sayyad Jamil-ud-Din Khan and Ubed-Ullah Khan Kashmiri to Lahore. At this time, early in October, Antaji Manakeshwar and some other Maratha Sardars with an army from Raghunath Rao and Malhar Rao Holkar arrived in the vicinity of the capital and demanded that, as the Marathas had released the Punjab from the hold of Afghans and as Adina Beg was their nominee, they would appoint a man of their own choice to govern that place. The Wazir agreed and Khwaja Mirza Khan was permitted to function as a full-fledged governor of Lahore. Antaji stayed at Delhi while his companions Tukoji Holkar and Narsoji Pandit marched to Lahore.

Mirza Jan Khan was hard-pressed from all sides. Internally he had to face the Sikh menace and externally, he must guard his province from the danger of Abdali which was looming large. He did not stand on prestige and immediately after the death of Adina Beg Khan, made up with the Sikhs. The Abdali who had never forgotten the insult which his son had to pocket at the hands of the Marathas despatched a force to the Punjab under the command of Nur-ud-Din Khan Bamezei. He crossed the Indus unopposed and entered the Sind Sagar Doab towards the end of September 1758. Although the Marathas had over-run this territory, they had no permanent garrison of any appreciable strength to hold back the Durranis. Moreover, this tract was then held by the

1. Ibid, 58a, 58a-b, 61b, 62a.

Khataks, the Gakhars and Muhammadan Jats and other tribes who were favourably inclined towards the Afghans. They rallied round the standard of Bamezei in the hope of loot. Nur-ud-Din crossed the Jhelum and plundering Khushab, Miani, Char Saru on the way crossed the Chenab into Rachna Doab. Here his progress was checked by Mirza Jan Khan with the help of the Sikhs. They defeated Nur-ud-Din who had to retrace his steps to the other side of the Punjab.

Nur-ud-Din, however, came back after some time and succeeded in defeating the Lahore governor.

At this juncture, Tukoji Holkar and Narsoji Pandit marched to the Indus. On hearing the news of the advance of the Marathas, Nur-ud-Din did not muster courage to follow up his victory and shrank back into Afghanistan.

Khushal Khan Khatak of Teri, however, was instigated to oppose the Marathas. Accordingly, a battle was fought at Hassan Abdal (Panja Sahib), in which Khushal Khan was killed and his men were defeated.

After this (November 1758) Tukoji Holkar and Narsoji came back from Peshawar territory at the call of Mirza Jan Khan and Mir Hassan Ali Khan.

In December 1758, Wazir Imad-ul-Mulk Ghazi-ud-Din honoured Raghunath Rao, the Peshwa's brother and Malhar Rao Holkar and offered to pay seven lakhs of rupees if they marched to Lahore and maintained peace. Raghunath Rao and Malhar Rao left for the Deccan, and the details of the agreement were settled by Jankoji Sindhia. The negotiations between the Wazir and Jankoji continued for about a month. The final agreement was concluded between the parties on January 31. Jankoji marched northwards and arrived at Machhiwara, on the southern bank of Sutlej in March. He sent Sabaji Patil in advance to Lahore but he himself did not cross the river because it would not be easy for him to capture and occupy Lahore and its neighbouring area. At Machhiwara, Jankoji received the members of Adina Beg's family (perhaps his widow and son) and other residents of Doaba Bist Jullundur who paid him some money.

Towards the end of August 1759, the Shah despatched a force under Sardar Jahan Khan to the Punjab. Sabaji Patil moved out to oppose his advance. A sanguinary battle was fought in which the Afghans were worsted and many of them including the son of Jahan Khan fell dead. Jahan Khan himself was wounded and

was forced to re-cross the Indus and retire into the Peshawar territory. The Sikhs rendered a lot of help to Sabaji in the battle.<sup>1</sup>

Soon after the Maratha chief Jankoji Sindhia called Sabaji Patil from Peshawar where he had come to check and roll back the advancement of Jahan Khan, the general of Ahmad Shah Durrani. Jankoji entrusted the affairs of Lahore to Naroshankar but then he changed his mind and Sabaji Patil was allowed to continue in the Punjab where he was assisted by three Pandits, Baporai, Daduroi and Sena.

Mirza Jan Khan and his brother Khwaja Saeed Khan were, at this time, very unpopular in the country. The main cause of the unpopularity was arrogant behaviour of Khwaja Saeed Khan who attended to the administration at the headquarter while Mirza Jan Khan went on military expeditions. Saeed proved to be a tyrant. He would indulge in extortions from the people and subject them to untold indignities. He would draw malicious pleasures by hanging one or two persons daily.

The process of the denigration of the personalities of both the brothers was speeded up by the Qizalbash Afghan captains of prince Timur's army who had been captured on the bank of the Chenab and enlisted in his service by Mirza Jan Khan. They conspired with the Maratha Pandits, and with payments and promises of money secured for themselves the high offices of state, the Subedari of Lahore for Mirza Ahmad Khan and of Multan for Saleh Khan. Mirza Jan Khan was put in prison, and Khwaja Saeed was paraded through the streets where the aggrieved citizens put dust and dirt upon his head.

---

1. *Tarikh-i-Alamgir Sani*, 205b.

J.N. Sarkar, *Decline and Fall of Mughal Empire*, II, p. 79.

## Chapter 9

# DISSOLUTION OF MARATHA PARAMOUNTCY IN THE PUNJAB

### Fifth invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali

The Maratha power, as it has been made clear in the foregoing pages, had reached its zenith by 1758. They had become supreme from the border of Berar to the banks of the Indus. Ahmad Shah's son Timur Shah had been expelled out of the Punjab by the Marathas. Ahmad Shah could hardly tolerate it, as it marked not only the doom of his plans of making the Punjab as an integral part of Afghan Empire, but also the personal insult to him. Besides this, he had, for sometime, been receiving petitions from Najib-ud-Daula Rohella, his representative in India, who had been driven away from Delhi by the Marathas and was being harassed by them at Sukkatal.

Alamgir had also written secret letters to the Shah entreating his Afghan Majesty to rescue him from the galling yoke of his cruel minister, Imad-ul-Mulk, Ghazi-ud-Din.

There was another factor also which prompted Abdali to undertake invasion of India to annihilate the Marathas. At this time a strong movement was going on among the Muslims to retain the whole of northern India under Muslim rule, and to ensure revival of Islam in its Sunni form. The movement was headed by a Muslim scholar and theologian named Shah Wali-Ullah son of Abdur Rahim, a Sufi Scholar, who flourished in the reign of Aurangzeb. According to Khaliq Ahmad Nizami "Shah Wali-Ullah's immediate problem was the rising tide of the Marathas and Jat aggression." Thus the revival of Islam in the first place meant suppression of the Marathas and Jats as well as of the Sikhs. This object could not be achieved either by the Mughal Emperor or by Najib-ud-Daula and hence he wrote a letter to Ahmad Shah Abdali inviting him to come to the rescue of the Muslims because

it was his duty to do so as most powerful Muslim monarch in that region. Shah Wali-Ullah was successful in persuading the Afghan monarch to undertake the task of crushing the Marathas and he began to prepare the public for his invasion.<sup>1</sup>

Ahmad Shah Durrani did not take immediate decision of marching upon India as he was embroiled in the rebellion of Mir Khush Durrani and that of Nasir Khan, the Baloch chief. Having crushed these rebellions and made treaty of friendship with Nasir Khan, Ahmad Shah Abdali got ready to invade India (July-August, 1759). The Durrani possessed full information about the deployment of the Maratha troops in the Punjab. Their main military posts were located at Peshawar, Attock, Rohtak, Lahore, Multan and Sirhind. He decided to penetrate into the Punjab from two directions, from the north through the Khaibar Pass and from the south via Bolan Pass. His advance guard under Jahan Khan was to follow the Khaibar route. He himself would march by the southern road. The main object was to take Nasir Khan Baloch of Qalat with him to India. Besides, Multan was situated on this route. After defeating the Marathas there, he was to meet Jahan Khan at Lahore.

The Durrani and Jahan Khan left Qandhar in the beginning of September 1759. Ahmad Shah commanded about 40,000 horse, Jahan Khan had about 20,000 men with him. On the approach of Ahmad Shah Abdali towards Multan, the Maratha governor with all his troops fled to Lahore. Though saved from the fanaticism of the Afghans, they fell a victim to the fury of the peasantry of the Jullundur Doab, and most of them were cut to pieces. The Abdali then marched towards Lahore where he reached in November 1759.

On the northern side, Sabaji vacated Peshawar without offering any resistance. He joined Tukoji at Attock. Here a short engagement took place between Sabaji and the Afghan advance-guard and the Marathas fled towards Lahore. Jahan Khan pursued them to Rohtas. They joined Bapurao. At this place, they made a show of some opposition and then fled away. At Lahore Naroshankar and Narsoji Pandit took to their heels. Narayanrao at Sirhind followed suit. The Marathas from Lahore went to Delhi via Amritsar, Batala, Jullundur and Sirhind, thus avoiding any direct road between Lahore and Sirhind.

1. Dr. H.R. Gupta, *Marathas and Panipat*, pp. 121-22.



The Sikhs, however, gave a better account of themselves. On the arrival of the Shah in the neighbourhood of Lahore with an army of forty thousand, a great battle was fought with them. The Shah lost as many as two thousand men and Sardar Jahan Khan was wounded. The Sikhs did all this as they regarded smooth sailing of Abdali acutely threatening to their own ambition of establishing sovereignty of the Khalsa.

Having occupied Lahore, Ahmad Shah Abdali appointed Haji Karimdad Khan, as governor of the Lahore, with Zain Khan as the faujdar of the four districts of Gujrat, Aurangabad, Pasrur and Eminabad. Amir Khan was appointed a deputy to Karim Khan.<sup>1</sup> Orders were issued to the Sardars and servants accompanying his majesty to bring their families and children to the capital of Lahore so as to populate its confines. The settlement of Afghans in Lahore was considered desirable, evidently to safeguard the capital from the inroads of the Sikhs, who, it was feared, might at any time rush in, cut off the Shah's base depot in the Punjab and render him helpless in the South. Raja Ghumand Chand of Kangra was appointed as the governor of Jullundur Doab.

Having made the administrative arrangements of the Punjab, the Abdali advanced towards Delhi. This news struck terror into the heart of Imad-ul-Mulk Ghazi-ud-Din, the Prime Minister at Delhi, who in a fit of fury against Emperor Alamgir Sani had invited the Shah to India with complaints against him, got him murdered on November 29, 1759. Khan-i-Khana Intizam-ud-Daula, his old rival, was also strangled to death. These murders infuriated Ahmad Shah against Ghazi-ud-Din.

Abdali reached Taraori on 24th December 1759. It was here that the Marathas tried to arrest his march, but here they were utterly routed and leaving 400 killed they fled from the battlefield. Abdali reached near Delhi where some Rohella chiefs joined him. He continued his march against the Marathas. Dattaji Sindhia met him at Barari Ghat on the Jamuna, but was slain and his soldiers fled.

After appointing Yakub Khan, a cousin of Wazir Shah Wali Khan as its governor, Abdali left Delhi and marched against Suraj Mal. He laid siege to Deeg (6th February, 1760). The fort was invested but was not reduced because Abdali merely wanted to

---

1. *Tarikh-i-Alamgiri Sani*, p. 222-a,b.  
Kanhiya Lal, *Tarikh-i-Punjab*, p. 82.

keep the Jats confined to this fort to guard against Suraj Mal's combining with the Marathas while the Afghan general Jahan Khan was sent to chastise them.

The Marathas now started the game of hide and seek with the Shah. While he was encamped in front of Deeg, a detachment of the Marathas advanced from the direction of Rewari. The Shah sent a strong detachment of the Afghans against them. The Marathas were defeated by a night attack on the 11th of February. It was reported to the Shah that the Malhar Rao Holkar who was joined by Jankoji Shinde at Kot Putli after the latter's flight from Barari Ghat was then at Narnaul. The Shah raised the siege of Deeg and marched out to meet and defeat him. The Maratha chief quietly disappeared in the northern desert to reappear at Balabgharh. At long last, his forces were defeated at Secunrabad (4th March, 1760). Malhar Rao fled away for his life towards Agra. Another important Maratha chief Gangadhar Tatyā retired to Mathura.

Shah arrived at Aligarh. Durjan Sal was holding it on behalf of Suraj Mal Jat. He capitulated and handed over the fort to Shah.

After the defeat of Malhar Rao Holkar, the Maratha power had practically broken, yet on the pleadings and implorings of Najib-ud-Daula, Abdali decided to stay in India till the Maratha army from the Deccan which was on way to Delhi was annihilated. Najib promised to bear the expenses of the Afghan army. Abdali granted Najib all the territories which belonged to the fugitive Wazir Ghazi-ud-Din to help him to cover the expenses.

Having settled at Aligarh, Ahmad Shah Durrani busied himself in hunting up for allies. There were five powers to be negotiated with. Of these two were Muslims, but they had been at variance to a large extent with Rohillas. Ahmad Khan Bangash of Furrukhabad was an ally of the Marathas. Shuja-ud-Daula was friendly towards them. The Rajputs and the Sikhs would have fully supported them. Even the trans-Ganga Rohillas could have been won over. But all these people had been antagonised by the Marathas due to their rapacity and inconsistency. The Durrani tried to gain them as allies as far as possible and failing that to assure himself that none joined the Marathas.

Ahmad Shah won over Shuja-ud-Daula, the strongest Muslim ruler in India. He joined the Durrani in July 1760 with his forty thousand horse and foot. Ahmad Shah Bangash had already been won over (13th April, 1760). Ahmad Shah and his Wazir Shah Wali Khan wrote letters to him appealing to him in the name of race

and religion, and holding out hopes of honour, elevation and favours. Ahmad Khan Bangash felt flattered at these letters and arrived in the Durrani camp in April 1760.<sup>1</sup> Similarly the important Rajput rulers, Madho Singh of Jaipur and Bijay Singh of Jodhpur were won over by the Shah who promised to keep a strict watch on the Maratha movements in Rajasthan. Ahmad Shah did not try to enlist the Sikh help. Perhaps, he thought that he would not succeed in this because of the strong Sikh resolve to clear the Punjab of the Afghans and the Marathas alike with a view to establish their own rule.

### **Battle of Panipat (January 14, 1761)**

As the news of the repeated Maratha disasters reached Puna, a very large force of the Marathas was prepared by the Peshwa and sent under the command of Sadashiv Bhau, a youth of thirty years to re-establish hold in the northern India. He was accompanied by Vishwas Rao, seventeen years old son of Peshwa Balaji Rao, as a nominal commander-in-chief. When Bhau reached the river Chambal, he was joined by Malhar Rao Holkar and Suraj Mal Jat on the 16th July 1760. He sent a strong force under Malhar Jankoji and Balwant Ganesh Mahendale guided by Suraj Mal Jat and Ghazi-ud-Din. On the 22nd July, 1760, Delhi fell and its governor Yakub Ali Khan marched out of it on promise of safe exit. Delhi yielded no booty, in kind or cash, to the Marathas, as it had already been drained of its wealth by Nadir Shah, Ahmad Shah and Wazir Ghazi-ud-Din.

To meet the shortage of supplies in terms of provisions, Bhau attacked Kunjpura which, with its enormous stocks of food and fodder, was virtually a base supply depot of Ahmad Shah Abdali. This was defended by ten thousand men, who were overpowered by the Marathas. Abdus Samad Khan the governor of Sirhind, and Najabat, the chief of the town were killed. Qutab Shah was taken prisoner. Since he had taken away the head of Dattaji Shinde in the battle of Barari, he was beheaded. The severed heads of Abdus Samad Khan and Qutab Shah were mounted on spears and paraded in triumph through the bazaars of the Maratha camp.<sup>2</sup>

The sack of Kunjpura, the humiliating manner in which the

---

1. *Delhi Chronicle*, dated 13.4.1760.

*Hayat Hafiz Rahmat Khan*, p. 90.

2. *Khazanah-i-Amira*, p. 106.

head of Qutab Shah and Abdus Samad Khan had been paraded in the Maratha camp, and the plunder of the supplies, inflamed the Shah. He called the Afghan Sardars to his presence and said, "Now, I cannot bear the Afghans being dis-honoured while I am living." He took advantage of Bhau's blunder of not putting the fords on the Jamuna river under guards and crossed the river and reached Panipat.

Bhau, in the meantime, had moved away from Kunjpura in the direction of Kurukshetra for a religious bath. When he learnt that the Shah had crossed Jamuna, he immediately wheeled back to meet him and arrived at Panipat on the 29th of October. Here the Shah arrived on the 1st of November, and took up position at a distance of about five miles from the Maratha camp.

Two months were occupied by skirmishes between the advance guards or patrolling parties of the two armies with varying results. On the 19th of November, Fateh Ali Khan, the brother of Ibrahim Khan Gardi of the Maratha service attempted a night attack on the camp of the Shah and succeeded in carrying away a few pieces of artillery. Three days after Shah Wali Khan was surprised by the troops of Sindhia. After some days Ruhillas were worsted by the Marathas under Ibrahim Khan Gardi, although Balwant Rao Mehendale, the most trusted lieutenant of Sadashiv Bhau, was killed. The death of Mehendale was a great set-back for the Marathas.

The Abdali then decided upon blockading the Marathas. Every night a body of 5,000 Durrani horses advanced as far as they could in safety towards the enemy's camp, and there they remained all the night, keeping watch against a surprise attack, two other bodies of his horse made half circles round the Maratha encampment, one to the right and the other to the left. These night patrols, each at least 5000 strong, mounted on powerful Turki horses and commanded by cavalry leaders like Shah Pasand Khan and Jahan Khan, cut off every provision convoy that attempted to steal into the Bhau's camp. The Kunjpura grain stores had, in the meantime, been captured by Dilawar Khan. The only hope of the Marathas then lay in Sardar Ala Singh of Patiala who came to their help at this critical moment and supplied them provisions from the north-west. The city of Panipat had no laid-up stores of grain and was reduced to the point of starvation at the hands of its occupants.

To acquire supplies, and to spread consternation among the Ruhilla allies of the Shah, Govind Ballal moved up from his headquarter at Etawa and started ravaging the estates of Najib-ud-

Daula. Abdali at once detached a fresh Durrani force under the command of Haji Atai to march against Govind Ballal. In a battle at Jalalabad, Govind Ballal was shot dead and the Marathas took to flight.

Similarly the efforts of Gopal Ganesh Barve and Krishnanand to raid the lower Doab were frustrated by the troops of Shuja-ud-Daula who scattered the Maratha troops near Nawab Ganj.

But a harder blow had yet to come. Bhau had sent a detachment of his men to Delhi to fetch some lakhs of rupees, which Govind Ballal had transmitted to Naroshankar Pandit. The first instalment was received safely in the Maratha camp, but the second accidentally fell into the hands of the Durrani.

These disasters dampened the spirit of the Sadashiv Bhau who sued for peace. Shah Wali Khan and even Ahmad Shah himself wished to enter into peace negotiations; but Najib-ud-Daula and the blood-thirsty Afghans and Ruhillas foiled Bhau's attempt.

There was then no alternative but to fight. Besides, the non-availability of food and fodder in the camp had reduced the Marathas to difficult straits and life had become intolerable. On the 13th of January 1760, some of the leading officers and soldiers surrounded Sadashiv's tent and represented to him the pitiable condition of the soldiers for want of food. "For the last two days we have had nothing to eat", said they, "Grain cannot be had even at two rupees a seer. Instead of perishing in misery by starvation we would rather go to fight the enemy whatever the fate has ordained must happen." Thus goaded by circumstances, Sadashiv decided to launch an attack upon the Afghans early in the following morning and ordered his officers to prepare themselves for the next day's struggle.

Sadashiv Bhau evidently had not worked out any plan for the battle except a general engagement on the whole of the front. So far as the deployment of forces was concerned, sufficient care was taken. Bhau had taken good care to isolate the not-very-popular Ibrahim Khan Gardi. Thus he was placed at the extreme left wing of the army in command of his nine battalions—approximately 8,000 men of foot musketeers. To support him stood at his back, such Maratha stalwarts as Damaji Gaikwad and Vithal Shivdeo with their light cavalry horse. In the Maratha centre stood Sadashiv Bhau, and Vishwas Rao, the Peshwa's son with their personal troops. The right was formed by Antaji Mankeshwar,



Pilaji Jai Dev's son, etc. with the Sindhia and Holkar contingents at the extreme ends.

Ahmad Shah Abdali on the other hand had worked out his plan to the minutest details. He took sufficient care that diverse and mutually irreconcilable elements did not come in contact during actual fighting. Najib-ud-Daula and Hafiz Rahmat Khan were at loggerheads with each other and hence the Shah put Najib on the left wing and Hafiz on the right wing. To guard against the possible defection in the event of an adverse fortune in the battle, he wedged in his own troops between the forces of his local (Indian) supporters. Again as a master of the art of war he had not thrown in, at the very start, his entire manpower, nor had he placed himself in the front. Actually, he had stationed himself behind the fighting lines with a sizeable retinue of his choicest troops to supervise, direct and control, and throughout the day of battle, he kept an hourly watch on the shifting fortunes of the battle and influenced it.

The right of Abdali's army was placed under Barkhurdar Khan and Amir Beg with their 3,000 Kabuli infantry and Persian horse, Hafiz Rahmat Khan and Dande Khan with their 14,000 cavalry and Ahmad Khan Bangash with his 1,000 foot. The centre was commanded by Shah Wali Khan commanding 15,000 troops, supported by 2,000 camel swivels and 1,000 Kabul infantry.

The Afghan left wing was commanded by Shah Pasand Khan and Najib-ud-Daula to be supported by Shuja-ud-Daula's foot, one-third of whose men were foot-musketeers.

From the west of Sewat where Shah Pasand Khan stood, to Chhajpur Khurd where Barkhurdar and Amir Beg were placed, the Afghan line of battle spanned a distance of 12 kilometers in a bent, curved line. The Marathas covered nearly half that much 5 kilometers from Nimbdi where Ibrahim Gardi was stationed to 1½ kilometers direct south of Panipat where Malhar Rao Holkar stood almost in a straight line.

The total strength of Abdali's army was 60,000 horse and foot, while the Maratha army numbered 45,000 horse and foot.

On January 14, 1761 the battle began with a cannonade from the Maratha guns and the first attack was led by Ibrahim Khan Gardi with a flag in one hand and musket in the other. In spite of hard fighting, Gardi's battalions could not hold their own against the Afghans. Damaji Gaikwad came to the support of Ibrahim Khan, but he was out-numbered. Thus failed the attack of the



Maratha left wing.

Simultaneously with the attack of Ibrahim Khan on the right of the Afghans, Sadashiv Bhau had attacked the Afghan centre under Wali Khan. There was exchange of fire of the lighter pieces of the Afghan artillery, which being more mobile and more efficiently handled than the heavy guns of the Marathas, proved deadlier. All of a sudden, the Maratha guns ceased firing, then in an instant, with thunderous war-cries of Har Har Mahadev, Sadashiv's men desperately rushed upon the Durranis of Shah Wali Khan. To begin with there was confusion among the Afghan ranks, but when Abdali added fresh forces to Shah Wali's forces the tables were turned. Wishvas Rao, the Peshwa's son, was killed, Bhau also fell fighting. The right of the Marathas did practically no fighting and did not stir out of their positions. Towards the close of the day, Malhar Rao followed by most of the troops of Jankoji fled away in utter rout.

### **Loss of the Marathas**

The Marathas suffered a great loss in the battle. Twenty-eight thousand bodies in thirty-two heaps were counted the next morning in addition to those lying in the ditch round their camp. Thousands of them were reported to have been killed pursued by the Durranis, with hundreds of the wounded dying of cold during the night. The booty was enormous. As many as 22,000 men, women and children including the sons and other relatives of the chiefs and officials, were made captives. Beautiful Brahman women were sold by the Afghans to the Ruhilla and other Indian soldiers at the rate of one tuman (about ten rupees) each. The cash and jewellery were beyond calculation, and the camels and horses innumerable.

On the 29th January, 1761, the Shah arrived at Delhi. He confirmed Shah Alam II on the throne of Delhi who at that time was residing at Ghotauli. The Shah personally spoke to Shuja-ud-Daula and Najib-ud-Daula and established Prince Jiwan Bakht in the citadel of Shahjahanabad as deputy to his father Shah Alam II and ordered coins to be struck and khutba to be read in his name.

No doubt, the Mughal Empire lay prostrate at the Shah's feet. But he did not press the advantage home. He had reasons for it. He was a mere political adventurer. Secondly, he knew it was impossible to govern such a large country from his capital at Qandhar. Moreover, it would have taken years of incessant war

to completely subjugate their great country which he could not afford. Besides this, all his efforts in India were directed to annexing the adjoining rich country of the Punjab and to securing the safety of its frontiers with a view to relieving the needs of his poor country. It was with this object in view that he wished to have on the throne of Delhi a person friendly to himself. His choice of Shah Alam II was perfectly in keeping with his convictions.

Shah, like a wise statesman, dealt with the Marathas in a diplomatic way. Although defeated, the Marathas were still strong enough to be reckoned with. This fact the Shah could not easily ignore. As Emperor Shah Alam was acceptable to the Marathas also, he had no fear of their upsetting this arrangement. But the arrival of the Peshwa himself with a large Maratha force in the neighbourhood of Gwalior set him thinking. He wished to run no further risks. Like a wise victor, he negotiated with equally willing Peshwa for lasting peace. After a good deal of deliberations, both the parties agreed to maintain abiding peace. The Shah left for home on March 20, 1761, but before his departure he gave definite instructions to Shuja-ud-Daula and his Ruhilla allies that they all should respect the latter's authority, which course alone could benefit them most.

### **Causes of the Defeat of the Marathas**

The first and foremost factor contributing to the failure of the Marathas was the young, impulsive and relatively inexperienced generalship. Doubtless, Bhau was a great and brave soldier who in the late twenties had won laurels against the armies of the Nizam in the Deccan, yet compared with his rival, Ahmad Shah, he was lacking in maturity. He possessed poor knowledge of Indian geography, and was ignorant of the habits and life of the people of this part of the country. Nor does he seem to have experienced the northern Indian climate. On the other hand, Ahmad Shah was a consummate general, quick to take advantage of enemy's weaknesses and evolve new strategy to grapple with new situations.

Similarly the Maratha captains did not match favourably with the Afghan captains. On the Abdali side there was a brilliant galaxy of officers such as Jahan Khan, Shah Pasand Khan, Atai Khan, Karimdad Khan, Najib and the Durrani Wazir Shah Wali Khan. Malhar, Holkar and Jankoji Sindhia had been defeated by the Durranis on various occasions. Jankoji and Antaji Mankeshwar

were too small men as compared to the experienced Afghan officers.

Besides this, the Maratha generals were not a united lot; they had serious differences among themselves. Malhar and Ibrahim Gardi were not on good terms. Holkar and Sindhia never saw eye to eye with each other. Holkar is accused of having been in collusion with Najib and with Shah Pasand Khan on the day of the battle.

Another factor which contributed to the Marathas disaster at Panipat was the faulty military organisations of the Marathas. The military organisation was feudalistic in nature. The national and well-disciplined army of Shivaji, working under one central organisation and commanded by one supreme leader, degenerated into a number of ill-disciplined feudal forces led by mutually hostile warring chiefs. Dr. H.R. Gupta says, "If Sambhaji impaired the discipline by permitting the war spoils to go to the army in place of the state treasury, Rajaram administered it a serious blow by the purchase of his adherent's loyalty with the award of fresh Jagirs and creation of hereditary fiefs. Balaji Vishwanath allocated to these feudal chiefs, fiefs with sovereign powers in internal affairs. By the creation of these hereditary military chiefs, he rendered the unity of command ineffectual. The Maratha chiefs in turn introduced widespread sub-infederation among their own followers.

As was natural, the system suffered from serious defects. The chiefs maintained neither the stipulated number of horses and horsemen, nor those of the standards required. It was never the custom of Peshwa's soldiers to expect regular or monthly salary.

At one time Holkar did not pay the poor souls for full sixty months. Under Balajirao the Army suffered in its efficiency still more. Shivaji had a purely Maratha and Bajirao a preponderatingly large Maratha army. Balajirao, however, did not permit himself to be swayed by the considerations of a Maratha or Hindu cause. But at the same time, he did not give the army any other cause to champion. According to Dr. H.R. Gupta, "His sole ambition was the acquisition of gold from north and south from Hindus and Muslims alike for which purpose even a non-Maratha army could be equally good." Consequently, his army consisted of mercenaries from all parts of India. Unmoved by any consideration of national interests, these mercenaries would often indulge in ruthless plunder and rapacity and bring notoriety to Maratha name. The

policy of denationalisation added to the feudal organisation of army brought havoc and proved disastrous.

The Afghan army, on the other hand, was better organised, better commanded. They marched under the orders of the one supreme commander. They were aware of the rigid punishment of the least insubordination or indiscipline and dared not waver in their duty. At one time (January 29, 1757), the Shah inflicted severe punishment on a few Persian marauders in his army at Delhi. "He slit their noses, cut their stomachs, thrust arrows into their nostrils and in the manner paraded them in disgrace."

The lack of food supplies was one of the major causes of ultimate defeat at Panipat. After December, 1760, the position of the supply of food and fodder in the Maratha camp had become dangerously acute. Horses and camels began to die in their thousands. Life in the camp became unbearable for the soldiers. It was not to gain the laurels of victory but just to put an end to their agony of starvation, that the hungry Maratha officers and soldiers urged Bhau to engage in a death grapple with the fully-provisioned and fully-clothed and thoroughly-fed Afghan troops.

The next factor responsible for the defeat of the Marathas was their defective artillery for which the Marathas were so proud of. The guns were very heavy and large, and it was not easy to alter their level. At Panipat their shots began to pass over their troops and fall a mile in the rear. The artillery suffered yet from another defect. The ammunition supply, like the food and fodder provisions, was always far less than the actual requirement.

Abdali's artillery was not only superior to that of the Marathas, it was the finest mobile artillery of that age in Asia with 4,000 soldiers on camel backs and armed with Zamburkas, besides 40 light pieces of cannon. Then his artillery was armed with mechanism to fire heavier bullets as compared to the short barrel guns used by the 8,000 foot-musketeers of Ibrahim Gardi. The rockets used by the Marathas did nothing more than frighten or wound the horses.

Various tactical blunders on the part of the Marathas also contributed no less to the failure of the Marathas. Prior to his march on Kunjpura, it was a criminal folly on Bhau's part to leave Naroshankar at Delhi with a comparatively small force of second line troops of new recruits to be easily crushed by the Afghans. No general can be pardoned for omitting to provide for his own safety in case of an unforeseen defeat. On 17th October, Bhau

reduced the Afghan Army at Kunjpura and six days later, the Afghan army crossed the Jamuna at Bagpat and cut the Maratha army from its base of operation.

The inability of the Marathas to win over allies in northern India was responsible for the Marathas debacle at Panipat. By his shortsightedness and selfish policy in the north, Balajirao had alienated the sympathies of almost all the powerful elements in northern India. He despatched armies to the north not to advance a Maratha or a Hindu cause but to extort money from all and sundry. This was the reason that Hindu chiefs of the Gangetic Doab and the Rajputs did not like the Maratha cause.

On the other hand, by a clever propaganda and clarion call to the defence of Islam, Najib had succeeded in rallying the Muslims of northern India to the banner of Islam and turn the conflict into a holy war against Islam and infidelity. The Marathas who in their greed of money had estranged not only the Muslims but even the Hindu population had no such common cause and failed to enlist the support of the Hindus. The Marathas under Bhau were not inspired by Shivaji's ideal of *Hindupadshahi*. Sadashiv Bhau "according to his own confession" was fighting for Tumuride Empire.

Besides this Poona government demonstrated a woeful lack of realism and statesmanship in dealing with north Indian politics. There were many occasions when, instead of rushing headlong in the face of catastrophe, the Marathas could have come to terms with their rivals. They rejected Najib's offer of conciliation in June 1759 and precipitated the most useless warfare with him.

Before the capture of Delhi by the Marathas, a durable peace with Abdali by cession of Punjab to him and confirmation of Najib in the Doab was quite possible, but the Peshwa who was far away from the scene and not in a position to understand the realities, brushed this aside. The Peshwa left Durrani no choice but a fight to the finish.

### **Importance of the Battle of Panipat**

What was the importance of the battle of Panipat? This question is at once interesting and thought-provoking. In the middle of the eighteenth century, two strong powers namely the Marathas and the Afghans, were contending for supremacy in India, and for sometime (1750—1761), it was quite an open question which power would reach its goal. Ahmad Shah Abdali



routed the Marathas and incapacitated them to establish All-India Empire or to assume the state of an arbiter in the Mughal affairs.

No doubt the Marathas recouped the losses within a decade and entered Delhi as victor in 1771, but a decade time was enough for political affairs to take a new turn. The consolidation of the British in the eastern India was a new factor on the political scene of India. On the 12th of August, 1765, Emperor Shah Alam of Delhi ceded in perpetuity the revenue management of the provinces of Bengal, Behar and Orissa to East India Company which had started aspiring for carving out British empire in India. The Sikh politics had undergone a lot of change.

Did the defeat of the Marathas benefit the Mughal Empire? No. Dr. H.R. Gupta says, "The destruction of the Maratha power did nothing to weld together the various states into which the empire had broken, or to restore the power and authority of the Emperor." The Mughal Emperor remained as weak as it already was. The chiefs of the various principalities were not willing to obey the authority of the Mughal Emperor. Immediately after the departure of Abdali, Najib and Shuja-ud-Daula reverted to the old selfish game. Even Ahmad Shah Abdali before he left for Afghanistan had advised his lieutenants in India not to irritate the Marathas.

However, for the Punjab, the battle of Panipat had far-reaching consequences. In the wake of the Maratha defeat their rule in the Punjab came to an end, and they having been shaken to the core became unable to play any role in the Punjab politics. As a consequence of it, only two powers, Afghans and Sikhs, were left in the political arena to fight for the supremacy in the Punjab.

### **The Sikh Movement and the Battle of Panipat**

The Sikhs, upto this time, had become clear about their objectives, besides being experienced in warfare against the Afghans and the Mughal soldiery. They were, in no case, willing to toe the line, either of the Afghans or that of the Marathas.

As regards the Marathas, they did not want to rule over the Punjab. There were many reasons for this. In the first instance, the Sikhs had embarked upon the career of conquest and held firm belief that they would rule over the Punjab which to their contemporaries in 1758 looked impossible. In this way, their basis of understanding was different and their values in certain respects conflicting. Hence there could not be any understanding and unity



of action between these two valiant communities.

Secondly, the Marathas had made their common cause with the Mughals and were fighting with the Afghans on behalf of the Mughal Emperor and his Wazir. As already stated, half of the tribute collected by the Marathas was to go to the Mughal Emperor and his Wazir. The Marathas were recovering the territories from Afghans in order to establish Mughal rule for which the Sikhs had very bitter memories. Hence they could not be a party to such a political arrangement which was to perpetuate Mughal rule in the Punjab.

Thirdly, Adina Beg's exploitation of the political situation to his personal advantage left no room for the Marathas and the Sikhs to come to an understanding. Had the Marathas and the Sikhs united, Adina Beg would have lost the gains which he secured by the Maratha-Sikh victory over the Afghans. In that case Sikh rule might have been established a decade earlier in the Punjab. Instead of appointing Sadiq Beg as governor of Sirhind, Ala Singh would have been appointed as governor seven years earlier, and Jassa Singh Ahluwalia would have been installed as governor of Lahore.

Another important cause which prevented Maratha-Sikh unity was the intransigence of the Marathas towards the Sikhs throughout the period of their supremacy in the Punjab. They did not utter a single word in admiration of the Sikhs' faith and their stand on different political and social issues. They ruled as if they were unalloyed imperialists interested only in their ends. This being so, the Sikhs looked askance upon them.

So far as the Afghans were concerned, the Sikhs' reaction to them was well-known. The Sikhs considered them their inveterate enemy. It had gone narrow-deep in them that the Durrani was not only an enemy of their faith but his political aim of making Punjab as important part of Afghan empire went counter to their own political objective of establishing their own independent rule in the Punjab. In view of all this, they were not prepared to allow Ahmad Shah Abdali to pass through the Punjab to Delhi unmolested. However, the Sikhs did not fail in their duty.

On the arrival of the Shah in the neighbourhood of Lahore with an army of forty thousand, a great battle was fought with the Sikhs in which two thousand Pathans were killed and their general Jahan Khan was wounded.<sup>1</sup>

1. *Rajwade*, I, p. 146.

Having defeated the Sikhs, Ahmad Shah Durrani addressed himself to administrative arrangements in the Punjab. He appointed Karimdad Khan to the governorship of Lahore, Ghumand Chand to faujdari of Jullundur Doab and Zain Khan to the faujdari of Sirhind. In march 1760, he summoned Karimdad Khan and Zain Khan to Delhi. They reported to him that the Sikhs were getting stronger day by day, that Ghumand Chand had failed in controlling them and that it was a difficult task to check their lawlessness in view of the meagre resources of Afghan officers in men and money. Ahmad Shah decided to appoint the diplomatic Abdus Samad Khan who two years before had won the favour of the Marathas. Abdus Samad preferred Sirhind and Lahore was given to Sarbuland Khan. The latter was so much terrified of the Sikhs that he did not proceed beyond Jullundur. He appointed Saadat Yar Khan to Lahore, and Rustam Khan to Chahar Mahal. Abdus Samad Khan took charge of Sirhind.

Shah's main consideration was to protect his line of communication with Afghanistan across the Punjab. Being deficient in strong park of artillery, he had ordered the Punjab governors to cast guns of a good calibre and send them on to him. It was on this occasion that the famous gun, Zamzama, was cast by collecting brass and copper vessels from Hindu and Sikh houses.

All the governors failed to subdue the Sikhs or win over their support. The Sikhs were determined to flout the Afghan authority. They fell on Rustam Khan, the incharge of Chahar Mahal, and his deputy Tahmas Khan Miskin who in his memoirs had given an interesting incident. He says that a report came to Rustam Khan about the attack of 50 Sikhs on village 18 km. from Sialkot. Rustam Khan and Tahmas Khan rushed to the place alongwith 150 soldiers. The Sikhs dashed upon them and Rustam Khan and Tahmas Khan took shelter in a neighbouring fort. It was immediately besieged, Rustam Khan and Tahmas Khan Miskin and six soldiers were seized by the Sikhs while the rest were either killed or fled. Miskin remained in captivity for ten days and was liberated after paying Rs. 200. Rustam Khan was subjected to greater hardship and was set free on the payment of Rs. 22,000.

Then came the turn of Saadat Yar Khan, the governor of Lahore, whom Sarbuland Khan appointed to carry out the administration on his behalf. He was terrified to the extent that he resigned from the post. After a few months, Diwan Surat Singh was given the charge, but he too was unable to hold his own

against the Sikhs. He was replaced by Mir Muhammad Khan, the son of Moman Khan of Kasur; but he too proved incapable of stemming the pressure of the Sikhs.

In November, 1760, a large number of the Sikhs assembled at Amritsar and Gurmata was passed by Sarbat Khalsa to the effect that Lahore should be captured. Sikh Sardars such as Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Jai Singh Kanhiya, Bhai Hari Singh Bhangi, Gujjar Singh and Lehna Singh fell upon Lahore in November 1760 and part of the city walls was pillaged. Mir Mohammad Khan shut himself in the fort. The Sikhs isolated Lahore by cutting off its communications outside, and demanded a heavy sum of thirty thousand rupees. Mir Mohammad had to appease them by giving them the demanded sum whereupon the Sikhs retired.<sup>1</sup>

Mir Muhammad Khan was imprisoned for showing cowardice and Yakub Khan (a nephew of Karimdad Khan) was appointed incharge of Lahore in place of Mir Muhammad Khan. Azam Khan and Gulmuhammad Khan were appointed assistants to the Lahore governor.

As the payment had been made out of the revenue of the Chahar Mahal—Pasrur, Aurangabad, Gujrat and Sialkot—payable to royal Afghan treasury, Yakub Khan and Azam Khan reported the matter to the Shah, perhaps with a view to absolving themselves of any responsibility that he might lay upon them. The Shah, in reply, ordered that the money be realised from the leading citizens of Lahore like Shah Ghulam Hussain Pirzada Sirhindi, Mian Naqi Mohammad, Mir Nathu Shah, Mir Shahr Yar, Hafiz Qadir Bakhsh and others through whom the payment had been made to the Sikhs.

The citizens, represented to the Yakub Khan that they would place their case before the Shah on his return to Lahore and would personally appeal to His Majesty for the remission of the amount. If they failed in their effort, they would pay.

The Shah arrived at Lahore on April 26, 1761 and remitted the amount. Sarbuland Khan was transferred to Multan and Khwaja Ubaid Khan was appointed to the Government of Lahore, while Raja Ghumand Chand Katoch was given the government of Doaba Bist Jullundur with Saadat Khan and Sadiq Khan Afridi as his deputies. The Shah then took return journey to Afghanistan leaving

1. Sohan Lal, p. 150; Ali-ud-Din, 120a-121b.  
Giani Gian Singh, *Shamsber Khalsa*, pp. 104-105.  
Kanhiya Lal, *Tarikh-i-Punjab*, p. 83.

strict orders for his officers that they should leave nothing undone to finish the Sikhs.

The Sikhs did not allow the Durrani invader to retire to his country in peace. They, in fact, had started chasing him right from the Sutlej. While crossing the Beas, he was dispossessed of a large number of the Maratha and other captives whom he was taking home. About 2200 Hindu women who were being taken away as captives by the Afghans were also released at the ferry of Goindwal and restored to their families.<sup>1</sup> After his short stay at Lahore when the Durrani resumed his march towards his country, the Sikh attacks on his rear started once again and continued till he crossed the Indus. The Durrani chief in the process, was relieved of much of his booty.<sup>2</sup> When at Lahore Ahmad Shah Abdali sent out a few expeditions against the Sikhs but their activities did not abate. Some of the Sikhs who were captured, were put to death with a thousand and one tortures but the Khalsa looked upon such deaths as nothing more than the trampling down of a few ants.<sup>3</sup>

Before leaving the Punjab Ahmad Shah Durrani appointed Sarbuland Khan to the Subedari of Multan, Khwaja Ubaid to that of Lahore while Raja Ghumand Chand Katoch of Kangra was entrusted with the government of Jullundur Doab, with Saadat Khan and Sadiq Beg Afridi, the Durrani faujdars as his deputy and Zain Khan Muhammed was given the charge of the Sirhind province. All of them were given instructions to punish the Sikhs and it seems probable that with this view the Abdali selected two local men as governors of Lahore province and Jullundur Doab.

On their way back, the Sikhs were opposed by Khwaja Mirza Jan, who then held the charge of the Chahar Mahal (the four districts—Aurangabad, Pasrur, Sialkot and Gujrat). The Khwaja was defeated and killed in the struggle and his troops were annihilated<sup>4</sup> (June 1761).

The Sikhs, numbering over thirty thousand, marched towards Jullundur Doab and defeated Saadat Khan and Sadiq Khan Afridi,

1. Browne, ii, 22; Kanhiya Lal, *Tarikh-i-Punjab*, 102-103; *Shamsber Khalsa*, 145.

2. The Sikhs hovered about the Afghan line of march, cutting off the supplies and doing what damage they could but never making a direct attack. *Rajas of the Punjab*, 230.

3. Ganesh Das Badera, *Char Bagh-i-Punjab*.  
Rattan Singh, op. cit., p. 430.

4. *Tahmas Nama*, 108b.

its faujdars. According to Miskin, "they were expelled like a fly out of milk."<sup>1</sup> After this, they marched against Sirhind. Its governor Zain Khan being away at the time, they entered the city and started pillaging it. But they were opposed in their designs by Bhikhan Khan, the Malerkotla ruler who happened to be present in the city. Soon Zain Khan returned and the Sikhs leaving the city fled away.<sup>2</sup> They, however, soon met together and pillaged Malerkotla with impunity to bring home to the ruler of Malerkotla that one would have to pay if one troubled them.

In the meanwhile, the Shah had reached Qandhar. He was all anger for the Sikhs who had not only relieved him of his huge booty that he was carrying to Afghanistan but also had insulted him by attacking, sometimes his rear, sometimes his flanks. Accordingly, he fitted out a strong expedition of over twelve thousand of his best trained soldiers and despatched them under the command of a trusted general Nur-ud-Din Khan to chastise the Sikhs. Orders were issued to the governor of the Punjab to give Nur-ud-Din Khan all possible assistance.

Nur-ud-Din marched with fury and brought in his train havoc and destruction which he spread over every place he came across during his march. But before he could meet the main body of the Sikhs, Charat Singh, the Sukarchakia Chief, decided to give him a taste of the Sikh arms. Taking the help of some other chiefs, he met the Afghans on the bank of the river Chenab and taking a defensive position received their attack in which the Afghans were utterly routed. Nur-ud-Din took shelter in a fort of Sialkot. The Sukarchakia Sardar laid siege to it and so exasperated the Afghan general that he felt unnerved and left the fort in the darkness of night for Jammu,<sup>3</sup> leaving his men to their fate. The Afghan army in the fort surrendered to the Sikh chief who allowed them to depart in peace. Sardar Charat Singh then returned to his headquarters at Gujranwala. This was a sensational victory of the Sikhs which besides adding to the power and prestige of Sukarchakia chief, went a long way to erode the morale of the governor of Punjab.

Hearing of the discomfiture of the Durrani general Khwaja Ubaid Khan, the governor of Lahore collected a large force and

1. Miskin, op. cit., p. 237.

2. Bakht Mal, *Khalsa Nama*, p. 97.

Gian Singh, *Shamsher Khalsa*, p. 110.

3. Sohan Lal, (ii), 6-7; *Panth Parkash*, 762; *Makbazan-i-Punjab*, 417.



issued forth from Lahore to punish the Sikhs. Halting for a few days at Eminabad, the Khwaja marched upon Gujranwala.

Several Sikh leaders as Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Hari Singh Bhangi, Jai Singh Kanhiya, Lehna Singh, Sobha Singh and Gujjar Singh flocked to the assistance of their comrade and made a night attack on the besiegers. A detachment of the Sikhs in the Khwaja's service also joined their co-religionists and turned upon him. Ubaid Khan lost heart and fled to Lahore,<sup>1</sup> leaving all artillery and baggage to fall into the hands of the Sikhs. The guns and equipage of the governor added considerably to the strength of Sardar Charat Singh and his comrades who spread in all directions and expanded their conquests throughout the country. This was a death-blow to the government authorities, which besides adding yet further lustre to the prestige of Charat Singh, strengthened the belief of the general masses that their best protection lay only in accepting the *Rakhi* (protective umbrella) and that the days of the Afghan-Muslim rule in the Punjab were now numbered.<sup>2</sup>

These victories encouraged the Sikhs yet further in their ambitions. On the 22nd October 1761, they felt that their victories would not be complete without their occupation of Lahore. Accordingly, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia marched towards Lahore. As the news reached Lahore, Ubaid Khan shut himself in the fort. Dal Khalsa besieged the city. The leading citizens, realising that governor had no heart to protect them, opened the gates to the Sikhs. Without completely establishing themselves in the capital (as the fort was held by Khwaja Ubaid Khan), they proclaimed Sardar Jassa Singh, the king of Lahore, with the title of Sultan-ul-Qaum. Leaving a detachment at Lahore to keep Khwaja Ubaid shut up in the fort, they rushed into the Jullundur Doab and routed the Durrani faujdars, Saadat Khan and Sadiq Khan Afridi, while their chief, Raja Ghumand Chand Katoch, quietly stepped into the hills on their approach. Thus passed the entire Punjab from the Indus to the Sutlej into the hands of the Sikhs, with only a few refractories here and there. owing allegiance to the Shah of

1. *Tabmas Nama*, 108-9; Ali-ud-Din, *Ibratnama*, 264-66; Khushwaqt Rai, *Tarikh-i-Sikhan*; Ahmad Shah Batalia, *Tarikh-i-Hind*, pp. 340-41; Bute Shah, *Tarikh-i-Punjab*.

2. Khwaja with a few attendants fled in the night to Jankalian. Then accompanied by 500 horse and foot of Chaudhari Mian Khan Chatha and Ismail Khan Kharal, he reached Sharaqpur wherefrom he conveyed to Lahore by Ajmal Arain and other Zamindars of the place.



Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup>

It was the height of the Sikhs.<sup>2</sup> The entire machinery of the capital fell into the Sikh hands. The Sikhs entered the royal mint and in a flash of victory, they struck their coin which bore the following inscription :

Sikka Zad Dar Jahan Bafazal-i-Akal

Mulk-i-Ahmad Garift, Jassa Kalal.

(The coin struck by the grace of God in the country of Ahmad captured by Jassa Kalal)

The coin struck by Jassa Singh is not available anywhere and some writers doubt whether the coin was struck at all. But we have a strong evidence of some contemporary writers such as Ghulam Ali Khan Azad, the author of *Khazana-i-Amira* which supports the view that the coin was actually struck. But then the question arises : Why is it not available ? The Sikh sentiment, at this stage, could tolerate a leader but not a Sultan or king. In fact, the Sikh concept of the sovereignty which the people subscribed to was that sovereignty resided in Sarbat Khalsa and certainly not in a king. The Sikhs, in the first flash of victory, struck the aforesaid coin but immediately after they realised that this would anger the Sikhs in general and hence it was withdrawn forthwith at the suggestion of Jassa Singh himself. The fact seems to be fully borne out by a contemporary Muslim writer Ahmad Yadgar.<sup>3</sup> J. Browne<sup>4</sup> who was in the service of Shah Alam at Delhi and wrote 'India Tracts' in 1787 mentions, "I have several of these rupees in my possession." The coin was struck in November 1761.

The capture of Lahore which had remained in possession of foreigners for nearly seven centuries and a half and coining of coin marked the highest water mark, although temporarily, in the onward march of the Sikhs towards sovereignty. The people of the Punjab now realised that even in case the Khalsa were expelled from Lahore they had the potential of becoming its masters sooner or later. But as the irony of circumstances would have, their glory was to be followed by the heaviest blow they had ever sustained since 1716.

1. Gian Singh, *Parth Parkash*, 809-11; *Khazanah-i-Amira*, 114.

2. We do not know as to what happened to Khwaja Ubaid Khan thereafter.

3. *Tarikh-i-Salatim-i-Afghana*, p. 173.

4. Browne, ii, p. 27 (Footnote)

## Chapter 10

# SIKH-AFGHAN CONTEST FOR THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE PUNJAB

### Sixth invasion and Wadda Ghallughara

Ahmad Shah Abdali could hardly pocket the insult done to him by the Sikhs by putting up resistance to his advancing forces to Delhi and then by harassing him on his way back from Delhi after winning a grand victory in the battle of Panipat. He was also shocked at the way the administrative set up evolved by him on the eve of his return to Afghanistan was upset by the Sikhs. Over and above all these developments, the Sikh's assertion of establishing their independent rule in a manner which was at once bold and defiant was considerably irritating to the Shah, especially when he wanted to convert Punjab, Kashmir, Sindh as the part of the Afghan Empire.

Thus in the Sikh rise he found a challenge to his objective, an insult to his person and an expression of the determination of the Sikhs to establish their independent rule. He, therefore, made up his mind to make all-out effort to crush the Sikhs to incapacitate them to further harm the interests of the Afghans.

Just when he was in a mood to act, the Sikhs on the occasion of Diwali at Amritsar on the 27th of October, 1761, passed a national resolution called the Gurmata to seize the strongholds of the Punjabi allies and supporters of Ahmad Shah. The nearest at hand<sup>1</sup> was Aqil Das, the Guru of the dissentient Niranjani sect of the Sikhs at Jandiala, about twelve miles to the east of Amritsar. The decision was conveyed to Aqil Das by Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Ramgarhia with a view to demanding his submission to the Khalsa, as the Sikhs called themselves. To effect the decision, siege was laid to Jandiala.

Aqil Das at once wrote to the Shah and sent off a camel-sawar

---

1. Khushwaqt Rai, *Tarikh-i-Sikhan*, 78; Ali-ud-Din, *Ibrat-nama*, 266-77.

post-haste to seek his help.<sup>1</sup> The Shah left the Punjab forthwith. On his arrival at Rohtas, he received the messenger and also a second letter from Aqil Das, beseeching him to hasten to his rescue. With only a few selected horsemen he hurried from Rohtas and arrived in the neighbourhood of Jandiala. His force followed him soon after. On receipt of the intelligence of Shah's march, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia had told the besiegers that the Shah intended to surprise them by a night attack. Accordingly, the Sikhs raised the siege and disappeared. Ahmad Shah was surprised at the quick disappearance of the Sikhs. Aqil Das paid him respects and made an offering of customary presents. He informed the Shah, that he had been besieged by ninety thousand Sikh horsemen. The Shah left for Lahore.

The Sikhs, in the meantime, had reached trans-Sutlej area. They selected the spot for several reasons. Hearing of the arrival of the Shah, they wanted to send away their families to places of safety, either to the south western areas of Brar Sikhs in the direction of Lakhi Jungle, or to the south in the neighbourhood of Raipur and Gujjarwal. As a matter of fact, they had known how Mathura and Brindaban had been sacked and how large numbers of women and children had been made slaves and carried away. They would not have the same thing happen to them in the case of reverse. Secondly, they wanted to be unencumbered and free to fight running battles and harass the enemy from the flanks and the rear. Thirdly, they had to avenge the death of Sardar Dayal Singh Brar who had been put to death by Zain Khan, the governor of Sirhind.

Bhikhan Shah of Malerkotla felt terrified at the vast assemblage of the Sikhs near Raipur and Gujjarwal hardly a few miles from Malerkotla. He sent a message to Zain Khan for help and informed the Shah of their presence in his territory where they could be easily surrounded and destroyed.<sup>2</sup>

The Shah considered it a welcome news and at once left the city of Lahore on the 3rd of February, 1762. On the 4th of February, the Shah despatched swift Durrani courier to inform Zain Khan that he would fall upon the flanks of the Sikhs the next day and that Zain Khan should march out with all his troops in the morning and attack them from the front. Accordingly, Zain Khan, Bhikhan

1. Ali-ud-Din, 267; *Gazetteer Amritsar District*, 165.

2. Gian Singh, *Panith Parkash*, 815-16, Rattan Singh, *Prachin Panth Parkash*, p. 444.

Khan of Malerkotla, Murtaza Khan Baraich, Qasim Khan, Diwan Lachmi Narayan and other officers prepared themselves for the next day's job.<sup>1</sup>

Early in the morning of February 5, 1762, Zain Khan moved out with his troops and detached Qasim Khan to lead the attack. The Sikhs were taken by surprise. The Sikhs were thirty thousand in number, including women, children and non-combatant followers, encumbered with camp equipage and other luggage. The battle began with the attack of Qasim Khan on the *Babir*, the camp followers and non-combatants of the Sikhs near the village of Kup, about six miles to the north of Malerkotla. With the rise of the sun the Shah also arrived on the scene. Shah's messengers informed Zain Khan that he had detailed his Uzbek contingents to lead the attack, with orders to kill everyone found in Indian dress and that Zain Khan should, therefore, instruct his men to wear green leaves of trees or green grass on their heads to distinguish themselves from the Sikhs.<sup>2</sup>

Learning of the attack, the Sikh Sardars rushed to the rescue of their *Babir*. Qasim Khan could not withstand the pressure of the Sikhs and took to flight towards Malerkotla. Tahmas Khan then joined Murtaza Khan Baraich who was standing on an eminence with five hundred men. At this time, troops of Ahmad Shah came and mistaking them as friends of the Sikhs surrounded them. Tahmas Khan, who wore a cap on his head, went to the Afghans and informed them that they were the men of Zain Khan who were going to attack the Sikhs with eight thousand horse-men. The Sikhs then held the Council and decided to send away their *Babir* with the vakils of Malwa Sardars such as Sangu Singh, the agent of the Bhaïs of Kaithal, Sekhu Singh Hambalwala, the agent of Sardar Ala Singh, and the agent of Bhai Budha Singh. When the *Babir* had hardly gone about three miles, Shah Wali Khan, Zain Khan and Bhikhan Khan fell upon them. The Sikh Sardars at once threw a cordon around their *Babir* and moved on fighting and fought on moving, occasionally turning upon their assailants and inflicting losses on them. Not being able to break through the Sikh cordon, Ahmad Shah pushed troops under Jahan Khan. He too failed to do anything more than creating confusion in their ranks. More Afghan troops were sent, but the Sikhs kept their

1. *Tahmas Nama*, 110 a,b; Ratan Singh, 444; Gian Singh, 815.

2. Dr. Ganda Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, p. 278; Gian Singh, *Panb Parkash*, 815-16, *Khuzan-i-Amira*, 144; Hasain Shah, p. 65.

positions. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Charat Singh Sukarchakia spurred their horses from one point to another, directing the movements of *Bahir* and of the main army trying to protect them. Ahmad Shah wanted to annihilate the Sikhs in pitched battle but the Sikhs went on moving. He sent a message to Zain Khan to stop the onward march of Sikhs and hold them. Zain Khan replied that it was not possible for him to hold them back.<sup>1</sup>

The Sikhs moved on fighting and arrived at the village Gahal. The villagers hearing the Sikhs' vengeance, closed their doors. The Sikhs had to move on. In the afternoon, they came to the villages of Qutba and Bahmani and rushed into them for shelter. These villages belonged to hostile Afghans of Malerkotla, under whose instructions, the Ranghar villagers surrounding the Sikhs from all sides and subjected them to plunder and massacre. Charat Singh rushed to the rescue of the Sikhs and beat back the Ranghars.

But by the time, the cordon had been pierced at many points with the result that the Abdali forces succeeded in inflicting heavy loss of life particularly among the non-combatants and women and children who had almost all perished. In spite of all this, the Sikhs held themselves in the field of action with invincible fortitude and tenacity, and continued fighting a running battle.

Not far from Qutba and Bahmani was a pond of water, and both the sides, the Afghans as well as the Sikhs, rushed to it to quench their thirst. For a short time, the battle was suspended and then it was renewed but not with that vigour. Towards the close of day, the Shah called a halt, then he was in the neighbourhood of Barnala.

The Shah had to give up the pursuit for two reasons. Firstly, his soldiers were exhausted. They had covered 150 miles in about thirty six hours, and had been incessantly fighting for over ten hours against a tough enemy. Secondly, he had gone far into the waterless sandy desert where the Sikhs might with fresh reinforcements turn upon their pursuers. The Shah would not run any unnecessary risk.

The historians have given diverse estimates of the loss of the Sikh lives. According to Sarkar's estimate, the number of the Sikhs killed stands ten thousand. Rattan Singh Bhangu states that fifty thousand Sikhs were killed. Latif accepts that figure of 24,000 given by Kanhiya Lal as approximately correct. According to Dr. Ganda

---

1. Dr. Ganda Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, p. 279.

Singh, the Sikhs suffered a loss of ten thousand lives mostly women, children and old men. We also accept Ganda Singh's view which is based on Rattan Singh Bhangu's views.<sup>1</sup> The loss was too much for a small community of the Sikhs. This is why the Sikhs called this event 'Bara Ghallughara' or the 'big Carnage' as compared to the small carnage which they experienced at the hands of Lakhpat Rai.

Barnala was a fortified town and was in the territory of Sikh Sardar Ala Singh of Patiala. He did not come forward to pay his homage to Ahmad Shah Abdali because had he done so, he might have fallen in the estimation of his co-religionists. The Shah's Indian allies Zain Khan and Bhikhan Khan of Malerkotla who had always felt jealous of the Sardar, instigated Ahmad Shah who ordered the fort of Barnala to be sacked and its neighbourhood laid waste. Ala Singh was then in the fort of Bhawanigarh. Lachmi Narayan, Diwan of Zain Khan,<sup>2</sup> assured the Shah if Ala Singh was captured, a ransom of fifty lakhs could be easily secured. As soon as Ala Singh heard of this, he slipped away. However, he soon secured the support of Najib-ud-Daula and through his mediation, appeared before the Shah at Sirhind, paid the sum of six lakhs and twenty-five thousand rupees as tribute—and Rs. 1,25,000 for permission to appear before him with his hair (the symbol of his religious faith) in tact, and Rs. 5,00,000 as tribute—and promised to remit a certain amount of revenue every year for the future.

The Shah was pleased to accept this amount and spared his territories. Ala Singh was, however, detained in the camp and was released on the recommendation of Shah Wali Khan. According to Mohammad Latif, Ahmad Shah Abdali imprisoned Ala Singh at Barnala and took him to Lahore where Ala Singh's wife Mai Fatto gave four lakhs of rupees as *Nazarana* and "the king was so much gratified with the manly deportment of the Sikh chieftain that he conferred upon him a rich *Khillat* and despatched a *firman* to the subedar of Sirhind, on receipt of which he was immediately to restore to him Jagirs. Ala Singh on this occasion was honoured with the title of 'Raja' and he struck a coin bearing the name of

1. Rattan Singh Bhangu, the author of *Prachin Panth Parkash* tells on the authority of his father and uncle who were present in the battle that out of 30,000 about 20,000 came back to the camp in the evening, p. 957.

2. He was formerly the servant of Maratha government (*Rajwade*, vol. vi, No. 464).



the Shah, as the bestower of the kingdom over which he then ruled."

The Shah returned to Lahore on the 3rd of March, 1762. He summoned to his presence Ranjit Deo, the ruler of Jammu, Nidhan Singh Randhawa, the Raja of Kangra, Mirza Mir Mohammad of Kadian and other chiefs. He received suitable Nazarana, bestowed upon them dresses of state and dismissed them with honour.

The Shah now turned his attention to the Sikhs. He had carried with him to Lahore fifty carts of the severed heads of the Sikhs and a large number of captives. He thought he could thus frighten the Sikhs into submission and silence.

A day before the Baisakhi festival, April 10, 1762, he appeared at Amritsar with a large force. He signalized his stay at Amritsar by committing terrible ravages and atrocities on his vanquished enemies.

The Sikh temple, known as 'Hari Mandir' at Amritsar was blown up with gun powder and the sacred tank was desecrated with the bones of men and cows and filled up with rubbish and debris of the demolished edifices. Kalandar Khan, a Durrani chief, was appointed to carry out these arrangements. Numerous pyramids were made of the heads of those who had suffered decapitation. While the Hari Mandir was being blown up, a flying brick-and-lime piece hit him on the nose and wounded him.<sup>1</sup> (A.D. 1762)

Shortly after doing all this at Amritsar, the Shah retraced his steps to Lahore. He caused the walls of the principal mosques which had been polluted by the Sicques to be washed with their blood that the contamination might be removed, and the ignominy offered to the religion of Mohammad expiated.<sup>2</sup> He remained in the capital for quite a few months. During this period, he invited the Maratha Vakils Bapuji Mahadev and Parshotam Hingne to Lahore. When the talks began, the Marathas wished to resume the negotiations afresh on terms of equality from the point at which they had been left by Sadashiv Bhau. But this could not be done as none knew the exact basis worked out between the Sadashiv Bhau and Shah Wali Khan in the days before the battle of Panipat. Even then, as a gesture of goodwill to win over the Marathas, the Shah recognised Madhav Rao, son of Balaji Rao as the head of

1. Ali-ud-Din, *Ibratnama*, 270; Khushwaqt Rai, *Tarikh-i-Sikhan*; Ganesh Das, *Chabar Gulshan-i-Punjab, Abwal-i-Najib-ud-Daula*, 56b, 57a.

2. Forster, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

the state and bestowed on him through the aforesaid Maratha envoys tikka of Rajaship, the impression of his palm dipped in saffron robes, jewels, horses and elephants. The Shah deputed an envoy of his own in June 1762 to accompany the Maratha Vakils to the Deccan. This secured the Shah the neutrality of the Marathas in the affairs of the Punjab.

Shortly after, the Shah attended to the affairs of Kashmir. At this time, the governor Sukh Jiwan thought proper to administer and govern Kashmir as an independent chief. He expelled the Afghans from Kashmir and refused to pay tribute. The Shah despatched a large force under the command of Nur-ud-Din Khan Bamezei with orders to apprehend and convey him to Lahore. In this expedition the Shah's general was accompanied and assisted by Ranjit Deo, the ruler of Jammu. A battle was fought at Chiraodar in the parganah of Desu but no serious resistance was offered by Sukh Jiwan's men. One of his relatives who commanded his force fled from the field. Sukh Jiwan himself fell into the hands of a miller who handed him over to Nur-ud-Din. Nur-ud-Din Bamezei put out his eyes and sent him to the Shah who ordered him to be put to death. Nur-ud-Din was confirmed in the government of the valley.

### **The Alloy is gone and the purified Khalsa remains**

Having been defeated at Kup, many of the Sikhs including their leaders had escaped to the desert country of Rohi in the course of the following night and in different groups had taken shelter at Jaitu, Ablumahme, Bhagtu, Ballu, Kawoni, Daurmati, Charak, Chabare, Ghoriya, Faridkot and Kangar etc. According to Rattan Singh Bhangu, "not a single Sikh escaped from the battlefield unhurt," most of them had lost their horses and camels. None was sure of his safety. Even certain Brar Sikh Chaudharis treated them shabbily out of fear of Abdali.

The great carnage, the demolition of Hari Mandir, the raising of pyramids of the skulls of their brethren who were decapitated, the hardships of the wasteland of Malwa—all these things could not depress the spirit of the Khalsa. They soon gathered at Mukatsar and exuberated with confidence passed a resolution that in the Ghallughara—Big Holocaust, the alloy had been swept off and only the purified Khalsa remained to carry on the work of the Guru and they must show this to the Afghans.

The Sikhs were apparently defeated, but the defeat

sometimes is as splendid as a victory, and on this occasion being caught between the jaws of the nut-cracker had offered a stout resistance. They had lost not because they were bad soldiers or they had no good leaders, but because their opponents were superior in artillery and they were taken unawares besides being encumbered with their baggage train in which were their women and children. Malcolm while reflecting upon the disasters, which the Sikhs had to face records, "The Sikh nation who have throughout their early history, always appeared like a suppressed flame to rise into higher splendour from every attempt to crush them, had become while they were oppressed, as formidable for their union, as for their determined courage and unconquerable spirit of resistance."<sup>1</sup>

Within three months, while the Shah was still at Lahore, they were once again up in arms against Zain Khan of Sirhind and inflicted a defeat on him (April-May, 1762). Zain Khan secured peace by agreeing to pay them a heavy tribute of fifty thousand rupees. But hardly the Sikhs gone about twelve miles, Zain Khan caring little for the agreement, fell upon their rear and looted their baggage. The main Sikh army then turned about and in the pitched battle that was fought at Harnaulgarh, Zain Khan was defeated and his property and equipage plundered.<sup>2</sup>

Emboldened by their success against Zain Khan, and relative inactivity of Ahmad Shah Abdali, the Sikhs rose on all sides. Charat Singh Sukarchakia and Bhangi Sardars carried their arms to the north and northwest of Lahore. Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Tara Singh Gaiba ransacked the Jullundur Doab. In the month of September, 1762, a strong army of the Sikhs was encamped in the neighbourhood of Panipat and Karnal.

As the Diwali festival was fast approaching, the Sikhs marched back homewards and arrived at Amritsar towards the end of the second week of October 1762. Nearly sixty thousand horse and foot strong, they were determined to measure swords<sup>3</sup> with the Shah to avenge the loss they had suffered in the Ghallughara. According to Browne they took an oath to make every effort to cut off Shah's army in case of an attack by him.

---

1. Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs*, pp. 102-3.

2. Sarkar J.N., *Decline and Fall of the Mughal Empire*, ii, p. 490.

3. *Umdat-ut-Twarikh*, i, p. 160; *Delhi Chronicle*, J. Browne's *History of the Rise and Progress of the Sikhs*, p. 25.

By this time Ahmad Shah Durrani had come back to Lahore from Kalanaur where he had gone to escape from the terrible heat of Lahore.

Apprehending trouble at the hands of the Sikhs and finding his position desperate because of a big chunk of forces had gone to Kashmir to subjugate it, he sent an envoy to the Sikhs to negotiate peace but instead of listening to his proposals they plundered him and his followers and drove them away. The Shah was cut to the quick. He at once marched upon Amritsar. Early in the morning of 17th October, 1762, the Sikhs drew up their army and immediately proceeded to attack the Durranis. The Afghans with equal resolution received their attack. The battle was dreadful. Both the sides fought with fury and determination. With the dawn of darkness, both the sides retired to their respective camps. In face of fierce courage of Sikhs, the Shah considered it advisable to withdraw his forces and retire to Lahore under cover of darkness of the moonless night.<sup>1</sup>

This signalled the upperhand of the Sikhs. The event was not only a great moral booster but also a manifestation of the resolve of the Sikhs to knock the Afghans out of the Punjab. It was also an affirmation of the fact that the Sikh movement committed to restructuring politico-social set-up was bound to succeed.

The Sikhs had achieved their objective in the battle of Amritsar. They had retrieved the prestige they had lost during Ghallughara. Having driven the Abdali back to Lahore, they themselves fled to Lakhi Jungle, fearing a fresh Afghan attack.

A little while after the battle of Amritsar, the Durrani expedition to Kashmir was successful and his contingent returned (November, 1762). The representatives of his Indian allies were also pouring into Lahore in the beginning of cold weather and had gathered in Lahore by November. Ahmad Shah Abdali now resolved to inflict another crushing defeat on the enemies of his faith and Empire. Consequently he fitted another expedition in their pursuit. Ahmad Yadgar in his work *Tarikh-i-Salatin* gives a graphic account of the event.

"The Shahan Shah one day marched towards Lakhi Jungle and Majha desert on a hunting expedition. He ordered that every Hindu having hair on his head which is the badge of the Sikhs

1. Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, i, pp. 321-22; C.F. Browne, II, 25-26.

must be slain. On hearing this news, the Sikhs fled away and concealed themselves. The triumphant troops were despatched after them.

"One day a body of the Sikhs appeared on the hunting ground. A contingent was appointed to capture them. Suddenly another body (of the Sikhs) came there from other side and began to fight the Shah's troops. The Durrani Emperor was smoking a hubble-bubble. These wretches blindly came ahead. On approaching nearer one Sikh horseman galloped his horse on the Shah. The valiant king put an arrow in his bow and hit him on the chest in such a way that it passed out through his body. The others were killed by his attendants and qarwals, while the rest took to flight and disappeared in the jungle.<sup>1</sup>

The Shah then made arrangement for the government of the Punjab, Kashmir and Sirhind. He appointed Kabuli Mal to the governorship of the province with headquarter at Lahore, Zain Khan to the subedari of Sirhind and Saadat Khan to the faujdari of Jullundur Doab. Khwaja Ubaid Khan and Murad Khan were assigned the administration of Kalanaur and Bari Doab respectively, of course under the supreme directions of Kabuli Mal. Jahan Khan was made responsible for the administration of Rachna and Sindh Sagar Doabs in addition to the province of Peshawar. Nur-ud-Din Bamezei was made the governor of Kashmir. The Shah also settled Delhi affairs. He confirmed Shah Alam II as Emperor of India. Najib-ud-Daula and Munir-ud-Daula, on the other hand, undertook on behalf of the Emperor to pay to the Shah a tribute of 40 lakhs of rupees a year.

The Shah left for Afghanistan on the 12th December, 1762. He marched down the Sutlej to Bahawalpur and then moved northwards to Multan and Dera Ismail Khan on his way to Ghazni through Gomal Pass. The scorching heat of the Punjab plains during the summer of 1762 had an adverse effect upon his health. A large number of pimples appeared on his cheeks, adding pain to the already wounded nose. His troops also suffered a good deal from the after-effects of the Punjab heat. After a short stay at Ghazni, he moved on to his capital at Qandhar.

---

1. Ahmad Yadgar, *Tarikh-i-Salatin-e-Afghanan*, pp. 172-73.

## Chapter 11

# THE CONQUEST OF SIRHIND PROVINCE

(January 1763—January 1764)

As soon as Ahmad Shah returned to Afghanistan, the Sikhs re-occupied their old territories. In fact, many of them had established control over their territories, even while Ahmad Shah Abdali was still in Punjab. They would leave their places only to mark time, or fight against the enemy or to take part in some common military campaign. Now in the first three months of the year 1763, they gave proper shape to the administration in their respective territories addressed them to the task of preparing the Golden Temple and cleansing the tank of Immortality which had been profaned by Ahmad Shah Abdali, and made plans to punish the enemies of the Sikhs and touts of Ahmad Shah Abdali.

The Dal Khalsa, therefore, drew a plan of action according to which Buddha Dal consisting of six Misls—Ahluwalia, Dallewalia, Karorsinghia, Nishanwalia, Shaheeds and Singhpuria toured over the country punishing enemies and replenishing their stores and striking terror into the hearts of the people, so that none might oppose them in future, and Taruna Dal comprising five Misls such as Bhangi, Kanhiya, Nakai, Ramgarhia and Sukarchakia under the leadership of Hari Singh Bhangi was assigned the task of protecting Darbar Sahib complex. They were also to take care of the work of digging out and cleansing of the pool of immortality and carrying out repairs of the holy buildings.<sup>1</sup>

### Plunder of Lahore

Buddha Dal without losing much time swung into action. It seems to have fallen on Lahore to punish the Afghan and other Muslims who had sided with Ahmad Shah Abdali in their massacres and persecutions. In the words of George Forster who visited

---

1. Miskin, *op. cit.*, 247.

Rattan Singh Bhangu, *op. cit.*, p. 473.



Punjab twenty years later. "Soon after the march of Ahmad Shah, the Siques were seen descending from their various hideouts in the Punjab, which they rapidly laid waste and after several desultory actions in which the Afghans were defeated they besieged, and what seems extraordinary they took the city of Lahore; where wildly indulging the enmity that had never ceased to inflame them against these severe scourges of their nation, they committed violent outrages. The mosques that had ever rebuilt or restored to use by the Mahometans, were demolished with every mark of contempt and indulgence; and the Afghans in chains, washed the foundations with the blood of hogs. They were also compelled to excavate the reservoir at Amrit Sir, which in the preceding year they had filled up. The Siques, however, keenly actuated by resentment set a bound to the impulse of revenge; and though the Afghan massacre and persecution must have been deeply imprinted on their minds, they did not, it is said, destroy one prisoner in cold blood."<sup>1</sup> The author of *Tarikh-i-Salatin-e-Afghana*, also testifies to this fact. According to him, "When the exalted Shah returned, that progressive sect came out from forests and mountains and busied themselves in plundering the property of the Muslims, turned their mosques and monasteries into the stables for their horses, and stopped the Islamic practices as 'Azan' etc. in the Muslim villages and subjected them to a great persecution."<sup>2</sup>

### **Sack of Kasur—Liberation of a Brahmin lady** (April 12-13, 1763)

The whole body of the Sikhs gathered together on the Baisakhi day which fell on April 10, 1763. They as usual on this day, paid their obeisance at Sri Hari Mandir Sahib and Sri Akal Takhat Sahib. Then at Sri Akal Takhat Sahib, they sat to review what they had done and what they proposed to do. When they were deep in deliberation, a Brahmin from Kasur stood up and related his doleful tale. He said that his wife had been forcibly seized by Usman Khan. He solicited the help from the Khalsa. Hari Singh Bhangi, the senior most among the Taruna Dal, at once put up his case before the Sarbat Khalsa. Discussion started. Not a few among the leaders gave their opinion against leading an

1. George Forster, *A Journey from England to Bengal*, II, p. 321.

2. *Tahmas Nama*, 113a; *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, i, 160.

expedition against Kasur. They argued that Pathans of Kasur were very powerful, the twelve forts of Kasur were well-provisioned and well-garrisoned and their leader Usman Khan was an experienced general. On the other hand, the Khalsa at present is not even in full strength, Buddha Dal being away on some other errand. To combat against such an enemy would mean a loss of at least 10 thousand lives, too big a price to pay for a single lady. If this was done considering it a religious duty, then the Khalsa would have to keep itself always ready to attend to such cases, which were so many, and the settlement of which would demand so many sacrifices. Hari Singh Bhangi argued that the Brahmin had appealed not to an individual or a particular group, he had appealed to Sri Akal Takhat, the Throne of Akal, which is functioned by the Guru himself. He, in fact, had appealed to the Guru-Panth and Sri Guru Granth. Should the Guru-Panth not heed to his implorations. Let the Khalsa not forget that Guru would take care of them, because he was a never failing saviour. The Khalsa must abide by the injunction of the Guru that stated that the Khalsa's foremost duty was to protect the helpless and extirpate the wicked.

The speech of Hari Singh Bhangi had its desired effect. Thus came forth the support of Charat Singh Sukarchakiya to be followed by other Sardars. Prayer (Ardas) was offered at Sri Akal Takhat Sahib and Hukamnama was read out. According to *Panth Parkash*, the Hukamnama was as under :

Leaning on the True One,  
 one binds down the All-powerful five (desires);  
 And God stands in one's midst  
 and makes one dwell on his feet;  
 And one is rid of all one's sorrows and maladies;  
 and one's ever-first, ever new;  
 And dwells on the (Lord's) Name,  
 night and day and dies not again;  
 And he, from whom one has issued forth,  
 one becomes He.

The Hukamnama (Divine command) removed all doubts from the minds of the Khalsa and they felt exuberantly confident that their sorrows and maladies were of no significance if they worked within the parameters of His Will. Now they advanced towards Kasur. At every stage they were joined by fresh recruits, and by the time, they reached Kasur, the numbers had swelled

upto 24,000.

Some of the scouts of the Sikhs had advanced to Kasur in the guise of shopkeepers and merchants. They furnished the news that the Pathans of Kasur were unaware of the movements of the Khalsa and spent their day in basements to save themselves from the sultry heat of the sun. The Sikhs made their way into the town at mid-day and took the people by surprise.

The Sikhs at once closed all the gates and placed them in the charge of their own men to ensure that the city did not have any communication with the world outside. They located Usman Khan and slew him along with his 500 followers. Ghulam Muhiy-ud-Din Khan, the head of the Pathan chiefs died fighting. His nephew Hamid Khan fell at the feet of Jhanda Singh and begged for his life on the payment of four lakhs of rupees. The Brahmin lady got liberated and restored to her husband. The city was sacked thoroughly and the buildings of the Sardars were burnt. A large quantity of gold, silver, ornaments, jewels and pearls fell into the hands of the Khalsa.

Jassa Singh Ramgarhia's brother Bhai Mali Singh got rich booty comprising gold, and diamonds from the house of Hirday Ram, son of Diwan Dila Ram. This booty rather than being equally shared with Sardar Jai Singh of Kanhiya Misl according to the custom prevalent among the Sardars, was grabbed by Bhai Mali Singh. Later on, it became the cause of a mutual conflict between these two Sikh families.<sup>1</sup> This event took place during the month of Ramzan and the final days of fasting (April, 12-13).

### **Jullundur Doab Overrun (June, 1763)**

Next the Buddha Dal under the command of their redoubtable leader, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia over-ran Jullundur Doab held by Saadat Khan. Diwan Bishambar Das was defeated in the battle of Urmar Tanda whereupon Saadat Khan shut himself up in his fort of Jullundur and dared not come out to fight.<sup>2</sup> Jassa Singh Ahluwalia occupied a large number of villages and carved out a small principality for himself. Other Sikh Sardars also seized their old possessions in Jullundur Doab.

---

1. Bute Shah, *Tarikh-i-Punjab*, 534-35; Ahmad Shah Batalia, pp. 491-92; Rattan Singh, *Prachin Panth Parkash*, 473-81.

2. *Umdat-ut-Tauarikh*, 160.

### **Discomfiture of Jahan Khan (November 1763)**

Ahmad Shah was piqued up at all these happenings. He deputed Jahan Khan to march against them. He entered the Rachna Doab in November, 1763 and made straight for Sialkot, evidently to secure the help of Ranjit Deo, the Raja of Jammu. Sardar Charat Singh called Bhangī Sardars, Jhanda Singh and Gujjar Singh to his assistance and attacked Jahan Khan. In the battle that ensued near Wazirabad, Jahan Khan could not withstand the fury of the Sikhs and shut himself in the fort of Sialkot. The Sikhs besieged the fort. In one day's fight Jahan Khan's horse was killed and he fell to the ground. With one voice the Sikhs shouted 'Victory to the Lord (Wahiguru ji ki Fateh)' and cried out 'We have killed Jahana'. Then they pounced upon the Afghans. Jahan Khan took to flight to Rohtasgarh, wherefrom he reached Peshawar. His camp equipage and relatives and dependants including his wife fell into the hands of the Sikhs. "But as the Sikhs of old would not lay their hands on women, they sent them safely to Jammu".<sup>1</sup> According to Ali-ud-Din, "Jahan Khan was defeated because of his differences with Kabuli Mal, the governor of Lahore who is said to have instigated the Sikhs against him."

### **Attack on Malerkotla**

Within a few weeks of this success, Sardar Jassa Singh crossed the Sutlej with the Buddha Dal, attacked Malerkotla and killed Bhikhan Khan, the ruler of Malerkotla in the battle. In this way, the Sikhs wreaked their vengeance upon him for his nefarious behaviour in the Big Carnage (Wadda Ghallughara). The town was razed to the ground and an huge booty fell into the hands of the victors. (January 1764).

### **Carnage of Morinda (January, 1764)**

After the plunder and destruction of Malerkotla, the next target of the Sikhs was Morinda situated near Kurali in Ropar district. The Ranghars of this place had captured the younger sons of Sri Guru Gobind Singh, and their grand mother Mata Gujri Ji and taken to Wazir Khan, the wazir of Sirhind, who put them to death on Poh 13, Samvat 1762 (December 12, 1705). The Sikhs naturally harboured deep resentment against them. Dal Singh and

1. Ahmad Shah Batalia, *Zikr-i-Guruan*; Ali-ud-Din, *Ibratnama*, pp. 274-75; Ganesh Das Wadera, pp. 203-04.

Ram Singh respectively of villages Ghuram and Salaudi pleaded for attack, but Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was not prepared to accept such proposal because he did not want to fritter away energies on small projects like this at the juncture when he had busied himself in the preparations to defeat Sirhind of which territory Morinda formed a part. The majority of the Sikh Sardars, however, prevailed upon him to march upon Morinda.<sup>1</sup>

To begin with, Dal Khalsa besieged Saheri or Kheri, hunted for Gangu Brahmin and his family, and put all of them to sword. Then they turned their attention towards Morinda (called also Baganwala) and despatched the scouts ahead.

When these Sikhs approached the village, the Ranghars cracked jokes and hurled taunts on them. According to Rattan Singh Bhangu, "The Ranghars showed them some ropes and told them that they had been made from the hair of the Sikhs and since these had worn out with the passage of time, they needed fresh hair of the Sikhs to be spun into ropes. This was too much for the Sikhs to pocket, and the Khalsa attacked them with full fury. Charat Singh Sukarchakia posted his troops on the way leading to Sirhind in order to check any help coming from that side; while other Sikhs got into the ditch and scaled the wall. A number of them belonging to the Misl of Tara Singh Gaiba got inside the town and threw open the gates after slashing the Ranghar guards. The Sikhs of Gharuan and Salaudi villages also played a pivotal role; and, according to Dr. Ganda Singh, they were the first to lead the attack.

They made straight for the house of Jani Khan and Mani Khan, who together with other members of their family were put to death. Then followed the massacre of the Ranghars and none other than children, women and the old aged and the Hindus was spared.

### **Fall of Sirhind**

After the sack of Morinda, the Sikhs marched upon Sirhind, the headquarter of Zain Khan whom the Sikhs wanted to teach a lesson for his nefarious part played in the Great Carnage of 1762. At this time both the Dals, the Buddha Dal as well as the Taruna were united. Tara Singh Gaiba of Rahon, Charat Singh Sukarchakia,

1. Rattan Singh Bhangu, *Prachin Panth Parkash*, 478-89; Bute Shah, *Tarikh-i-Punjab*, pp. 534-35; Ahmad Shah Batalia, *Tarikh-i-Punjab*, pp. 91-92.

Jhanda Singh and Ganda Singh Bhangi had also arrived. Ala Singh of Patiala with his contingents under the command of Himmat Singh and Chain Singh had also joined. Zain Khan, on the other hand, was not feeling hopeful. He had become unpopular on account of his oppressive and high-handed policy. Tahmas Khan, the author of *Tabmas Nama* says that "Zain Khan had upset all previous rules and regulations. He stopped paying salaries to his troops and started unjust plundering and ravaging of the villages in the district." The same writer added that he told his friends that Zain Khan's army would soon perish and the city of Sirhind would be ruined and devastated.

Besides this, Zain Khan could expect no help from any quarter. Jahan Khan had fled away and Ahmad Shah Abdali was far away in Afghanistan. The Lahore Subedar was also much terror-stricken and was unable to give any help. His own captains Murtza Khan Baraich and Qasim Khan had left him in disgust. The local chiefs were hostile to him for his high-handedness.

When the Sikhs reached in the neighbourhood of Sirhind, Zain Khan was out on revenue collecting expedition. On receipt of this information, he returned towards the city. But before he could reach the city, he was engaged in a battle near the village of Manhera about seven miles to the east of Sirhind wherein he was killed. With his death, his troops took to flight. They were hotly pursued and cut to pieces with impunity.

The infuriated Sikhs then rushed into the city and subjected it to an indiscriminate plunder. According to Muhammad Latif, "Not a house was left standing, and custom exists to this day according to which it is a meritorious act for every Sikh to carry away a brick from the place and throw it into the Sutlej, to mark his detestation and abhorrence of the place."<sup>1</sup> According to Dr. Ganda Singh, "To fulfil a prophecy ascribed to Guru Gobind Singh, a number of donkeys were sent for and the leading Sardars ploughed up some of the places with their own hands. The booty that fell into the hands of the Sikhs was immense.<sup>2</sup> The Sikhs pulled down the walls in which the Guru's sons were bricked up alive. They erected a platform at that particular place where the Guru's sons were beheaded and a priest was posted to recite Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Then a Gurdwara was built on this spot, and it was named

1. Mohd. Latif, *History of the Punjab*, p. 285.

2. Dr. Ganda Singh, *Ahmad Shah Abdali*, p. 292.



Fatehgarh.

The entire province of Sirhind about 220 miles in length and 160 miles in the width extending from the Sutlej on the north to the districts of Karnal and Rohtak in the south and from the boundary of the Bahawalpur state on the west to the Jamuna in the east, lay prostrate at the feet of the Sikhs who hastily parcelled it out among themselves. "Tradition still describes how the Sikhs dispersed as soon as the battle was won and how riding by day and night, each horseman would throw his hilt and scabbard, his articles of dress and accoutrement, until he was almost naked, into successive villages, to mark them his."<sup>1</sup> Such was the discipline among the Sikhs that the village occupied by one Misl would not be occupied by another. But no one was willing to occupy Sirhind on account of its 'evil' associations. At last, it was assigned to Bhai Budha Singh, an old companion of Guru Gobind Singh who accepted it after offering 'Ardas' (Sikh prayer).<sup>2</sup> It was, however, later on purchased by Ala Singh for a sum of twenty-five thousand rupees.

### Reoccupation of territories

Having divided the province of Sirhind among themselves, Taruna Dal returned to the north of Sutlej and Buddha Dal whipped up by the impulse of victory, crossed the Jamuna at Buriya and poured into the Jamuna Gangetic Doab. They ransacked Saharnpur on the 20th February, 1764 and pushed on to Shamli and Kandala. Najib-ud-Daula, the master of these areas, finding himself unable to meet the Sikhs in the open field on account of his exhaustion caused by his campaign against Jats of Bharatpur, paid them eleven lakhs of rupees whereupon the Sikhs returned to their country by the end of February 1764.<sup>3</sup>

Taruna Dal comprising of Sukarchakia, Kanhiya, Ramgarhia and Bhangi Misls, entered the Jullundur Doab whose Afghan Governor, Saadat Khan, quietly left his territory and fled away. In this way, the whole of Doab fell into the hands of the Sikhs who partitioned it among themselves.

They then marched upon Lahore. Khwaja Ubaid Khan who

1. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, pp. 109-110.

2. Rattan Singh, *Prachin Panth Parkash*, pp. 506-07; Kanhiya Lal, *Tarikh-i-Punjab*, p. 86.

3. Nur-ud-Din, *Ahwal-i-Najib-ud-Daula*, p. 729; *Tabmas Nama*, p. 119a; Williams, *The Sikhs in the Upper Doab*, Cal. Rev., Vol. 50 (1875).

had arrived from Kalanaur was killed in a battle. The Sikhs demanded of Kabuli Mal, the governor of Lahore to surrender them all the butchers of the place and to prohibit the killing of the cows. This was of course difficult for the Governor to do. To surrender himself to the Sikhs was not altogether in accord with his honour, while to deliver over the Mohammedan butchers to their tender mercies and to prohibit kire-killing was to incur the displeasure of the Shah, his master. Under these circumstances, he hit upon a compromise solution. He chopped off the noses and ears of two or three butchers, of course with the consent of the leading citizens. He also agreed to pay a large sum of money as a tribute to them and to keep in Lahore Tek Chand, a wakil of Sardar Hari Singh Bhangi. This was the beginning of the Sikh control in the capital of Lahore. The Afghan domination of the Panjab to the east of the Chenab was thus reduced to a nominal government virtually confined to the city including the fort thereat.<sup>1</sup>

### **End of Afghan Domination between the Indus and the Chenab**

The Afghan domination between the Chenab and the Indus was put to an end by Sardar Charat Singh Sukarchakia accompanied by Sardar Gujjar Singh Bhangi. Both these Sardars crossed the Chenab into Chaj Doab and having overpowered the Afghan resistance pushed on beyond the Jhelum. Sarbuland Khan moved out to oppose the Sikhs, but was compelled under pressure of the Sikhs, to seek shelter in the fort of Rohtas. The Sikh Sardars laid siege to it. After four months, they pretended to raise the siege and moved away. Sarbuland Khan<sup>2</sup> came out to pursue the Sikhs and fell into their trap. The Sikh Sardars lost no time in turning back and rushing upon the fort which was taken and Sarbuland Khan was made a captive. Charat Singh treated the Khan so nicely that he offered to serve under him if he were to proclaim himself king. The Sardar said, "The kingship is already bestowed on us by the Guru, we want to keep you as a prisoner so that the world may know that Charat Singh has captured the uncle of the Shah."

1. Ali-ud-Din, *Ibratnama*, 126b.

2. According to Dr. H.R. Gupta, Sarbuland Khan was returning from Kashmir under the order of the Shah. But according to other authorities Nur-ud-Din Bamezei was the governor of that province in 1764 and Sarbuland Khan had not yet been sent there. C.F. Kirpa Ram, *Gulzar-i-Kashmir*, 234; *Gulab Namah*.

"But there is a still greater name in releasing me," said Sarbuland Khan. "They will say," he continued, "that Charat Singh captured the uncle of Ahmad Shah and then set him at liberty." The Khan, however, was released after having received from him a sum of two lakhs of rupees.<sup>1</sup>

Charat Singh then seized the parganas of Dhanni, Pothohar, Chakwal, Jalalpur and Sayyadpur after which the whole district made submission to him. He then came to Pind Dadan Khan and entered into a treaty with Sahib Khan Gakhar in whose territory Dadan Khan existed. According to the terms of the treaty, Charat Singh constructed several forts in which he quartered his troops, assigning the command to Budh Singh and Kanwar Singh.<sup>2</sup>

After this, Charat Singh seized some portions of Salt Range. He obtained considerable revenue by selling the mart from Miani to Ramnagar. At each place, Charat Singh appointed his own faujdars. Izzat Singh was given the charge of Dhani country which he could hold with much difficulty. In this way, Charat Singh's rule was established over a solid block of territory extending between the Indus and the Jhelum from the foot of the hills to the southern outskirts of the Salt Range.

### End of Afghan Rule in South-West Punjab

Likewise the Afghan domination was brought to an end in the direction of Multan in the south-west by Hari Singh Bhangi and his sons, Jhanda Singh and Ganda Singh and the Nakai Sardar Hira Singh. They captured the territories of Lamma and Nakka which were appropriated by the Nakai Misl. Hari Singh then marched upon Multan, captured and plundered it. Then he crossed over the Indus and laid waste the territory of the Dera Jat. Qazi Nur Muhammad tells us in his book *Jang Nama*, "These accursed infidels (the Sikhs) had spread themselves from Lahore to the Dera, and had razed the Muslim mosques to the ground..... had overpowered the Muslims and over-run the territories of Multan."<sup>3</sup> He further wrote, "The city of Multan was given to thorough

1. Ganesh Das, *Chahar Gulshan-i-Punjab*, pp. 178-79.

2. Rattan Singh Bhangu, *Prachin Panth Parkash*, p. 502.

3. Qazi Nur Muhammad, *Jang Nama*, pp. 40-44. *Jang Nama* presents eye-witness account. Qazi followed in Ahmad Shah Abdali's train and recorded his observations very minutely. Prior to the discovery of this work there was no other source to throw light on the seventh invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali.

plunder. The dogs (Sikhs) brought immense booty from them about which he would not like to pen down.

The Sikhs then subdued the sials of Jhang territory. These men offered the Sikhs a bold front but were defeated and their territories were seized by Bhangis and fell to the share of Jhanda Singh. The administration of this territory was entrusted to Karam Singh Dulu, a Bhangi Chief.<sup>1</sup>

### **New Edifice of Hari Mandir**

On the forthcoming Baisakhi (April, 1764) the Khalsa gathered at Amritsar to thank the Guru for the success and glory. On this occasion when the meeting of the Sarbat Khalsa was being held at Sri Akal Takhat Sahib, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia drew the attention of the Sikhs that the buildings at Darbar Sahib complex were in a state of dilapidation. The pool of Immortality had also to be desilted and purified. Now when the Durrani rule was no more and the Khalsa had acquired a lot of wealth from the plunder of Sirhind, it was the time to take up the task of reconstruction of Sri Hari Mandir Sahib and its adjoining buildings. Sardar Jassa Singh spread a sheet of cloth in front of Sri Akal Takhat Sahib and placed on it an amount of nine lakh rupees, the total money which fell into his hands at the time of the sack of Sirhind. Other Sardars also contributed an amount of five lakh rupees. The total money was handed over to Des Raj, a scion of Bidhi Chand Sursingh Wala to undertake the task.

### **Abdali's seventh Invasion**

Hearing of the Sikh successes in the Punjab, Abdali marched into the Punjab. This time he raised a cry of Jihad, to arouse his soldiers and general Muslim public to work in full fury against the Sikhs. At Eminabad, he was joined by Amir Naseer Khan of Kalat, whom the Shah had specially invited to take part in the Jihad (Holy War). When he reached Lahore, Jahan Khan complained against the conduct of Kabuli Mall and accused him of complicity with the Sikhs but on inquiry he was found to be innocent. On the recommendation of Qazi Idris, the butcher affair was dismissed as a piece of timely diplomacy in the interest of the state. Kabuli Mall was confirmed in the government of Lahore and his sister's son, Amir Singh, was appointed the Bakhshi of the army. Leaving

1. *Imperial Gazetteer of India, Punjab, II, p. 208.*

Amir Singh and his own son-in-law, Jagan Nath in Lahore, Kabuli Mall joined the camp of the Shah and remained with him throughout the campaign.

As the Shah was marching from the northwest, the Sikh Sardars had quietly left their places on Grand Trunk Road and vanished out of sight. Then when the Shah was at Lahore they suddenly appeared under the leadership of Sardar Charat Singh. They attacked the advance guard commanded by Garaham Khan and Ahmad Khan Balidi. The attack was so furious that Ahmad Khan and his son were killed. The situation was saved by the timely arrival of Mir Naseer Khan along with his men. In the hard contested battle, Naseer Khan's horse was shot dead and he fell down. It was with great difficulty that he was saved by two of his brave servants, Mohammad Hussain and Mir Mangah. At fall of night, the bitter contest came to a close and the Sikhs moved away into the area, known as Lakhi Jungle. Qazi Nur Muhammad who was present in the battle and had a narrow escape from the attack of a Sikh, supplies minute details of it.<sup>1</sup>

Ahmad Shah Abdali marched upon Amritsar only to find that the Sikhs had not been there. Only thirty of them, says Qazi Nur Muhammad, were there in an enclosure (the Bunga of the Akal Takhat). As soon as the vanguard of the Afghan army entered the Sikh temple on the 1st of October, 1764, these thirty warriors of the Jatha of Bhai Gurbakhsh Singh Shaheed fearlessly rushed out to grapple with the enemy. "They had neither the fear of slaughter nor the dread of death. They grappled with the Ghazis, spilt their own blood—and sacrificed their lives for the Guru."<sup>2</sup> The Muslims galloped right and left but came across no more Sikhs and then returned to Lahore, having destroyed the buildings at Darbar Sahib complex.

Ahmad Shah Durrani who felt exasperated at not getting an opportunity to fight with the Sikhs in a pitched battle on account of their flight called a council of war and discussed his future plan of action. Eventually, it was decided that they should march towards Sirhind. The Shah chose to detour through the Upper Bari and Jullundur Doabs because this part of the country was the home of the Sikhs and he wished that they should be killed in large numbers and their property pillaged. Moreover, this tract

---

1. Nur Muhammad, *Jang Nama*, pp. 40, 44.

2. *Ibid*, pp. 97-100.

being fertile, Afghan troops could feed themselves easily. "The entire country was ransacked. Whichever side the army moved the people were massacred in broad-day light. There was no distinction between Sikhs and non-Sikhs. The people ran away and hid themselves wherever they could. Nobody remembered the innumerable things that fell into the hands of crusaders. Whether men or beasts they fed upon nothing but sugar-candy and sugar cane. The stomachs of all, big and small, slaves and slave-girls, were filled with these four things—flesh of cows, sugar-cane, sugar-candy and sesame,"<sup>1</sup>

Travelling through easy marches, the Abdali advanced towards Jandiala where his helper Guru Aqil Das lived. When the Afghan troops reached near Jandiala, the Sikhs in a body came to oppose them. A battle was fought in which the Afghans lost the day and Rahim Khan Bakhshi was slain.<sup>2</sup>

Fifteen days after his departure from Lahore, the Afghan army reached Batala. Here another engagement took place against the Sikhs in which Sarbuland Khan was wounded and the Durrani defeated. Another action at Adina Nagar remained drawn.<sup>3</sup>

### **The battle of Jullundur Doab**

The Afghans then crossed the Beas and entered the present district of Hoshiarpur in Jullundur Doab.

All of a sudden, one day the Sikhs appeared in front of the Afghan army and blocked the path of the advance-guard commanded by Sardar Jahan Khan. As the Afghan general had fought against the Sikhs on several occasions and known their tricks and tactics, he stuck to the place where he stood, waiting for reinforcements. The Sikhs came running to the field and created havoc. They had muskets and smouldering wicks ready in their hands and they rushed sometimes to the right and sometimes to the left. On the arrival of the main army under Naseer Khan, they adopted their usual tactics and disappeared. The night was about to fall and as none of the Sikhs was visible, Naseer Khan returned to the camp.

The day's battle being over, the Afghans continued their

1. *Jang Nama*, pp. 103-104.

2. *Shamsber Khalsa*, p. 120.

Khushwaqt Rai, *Kitab-i-Tarikh-i-Punjab*, p. 96.

3. Ahmad Shah, *Tarikh-i-Punjab*, p. 894.

Khushwaqt Rai, *Kitab-i-Tarikh-i-Punjab*, p. 97.



march and on the third day they reached the Sutlej, which they crossed probably at Ropar Ghat. When the baggage train was carried across the river, they were attacked by the Sikhs; but the Shah's orders were so strict that everybody stood his ground firmly and after a few hours, the Sikhs retired disappointed without being able to seize anything.

The Abdali halted on the other bank of the Sutlej for the night and early next morning made straight for Pinjore wherefrom he, by slow marches, reached Kunjpura within two months to render help to Najib-ud-Daula in his struggle against the Jats and the Sikhs. But in the meantime by the middle of February, 1765 peace had been concluded between Najib-ud-Daula and the Jats. There was then no purpose in moving further southwards.

At Kunjpura, plans to crush the Sikhs were discussed. The Durrani officers were afraid of the Indian summer and rains and they showed willingness to go back home suggesting to their master to come to India again in the following winter. Consequently, Ahmad Shah decided to return. According to Dr. Ganda Singh, there was another thing that might have influenced the decision of the Shah. Fifteen thousand Sikhs had been freed from the Jat-Rohilla campaign and were then marching to their country<sup>1</sup> and the Shah was sure to take cognizance of this factor.

After Kunjpura the Shah reached Sirhind in four stages. The sight of the city, once flourishing but now in ruins, shocked the Afghans greatly. The whole city lay in ruins. "No man not even a bird except an owl, was to be seen there though I roamed about a good deal in the city. The shops and bazaars were there but the shopkeepers had left for the world beyond."<sup>2</sup> Sirhind was in the territory of Ala Singh of Patiala, with the country around it in possession of the Sikhs. Ala Singh presented himself before the Durrani king with costly gifts. He told the Shah that he had tried several times to beat the Sikhs, but they were made of such stuff that more they were killed, the more they grew. The Shah conferred upon Ala Singh the title of Raja, invested him with a khillat, kettledrum and banners and installed him in the independent chieftainship of Sirhind for annual tribute of three and a half lakh of rupees. Ahmad Shah Abdali did this impelled by two reasons; firstly he was sure that another government in Sirhind would meet the fate of that of Zain Khan and secondly

1. Dr. Ganda Singh, *Ahmad Shah Abdali*, p. 302.

2. Nur Muhammad, *Jang Nama*.

the appointment of Ala Singh would cause rupture between the Majha and Malwa Sikhs and would thus weaken them considerably. If some other chiefs of the Sikhs had also similarly submitted to the Shah, he would have been glad to recognize them as rulers in the Punjab and end the incessant struggle with them. Qazi Nur Muhammad says, "To say nothing of the Zamindars of the country who had fled away on the arrival of the Shah, even the Sikhs could be forgiven by the Shah if they undertook to be obedient to him." But they were made of a different stuff. They disdained to submit to a foreigner, much less to one who had slaughtered so many of their brethren in the Ghallughara and had demolished and desecrated the holiest of their temples. They preferred, therefore, to continue the struggle for a more complete freedom, rather than submit for a meaningless honour.

After this, the Shah moved homewards and crossed the Sutlej probably at Ropar. In the meanwhile, Buddha Dal had joined Taruna Dal and now they decided to give pitched battle to the Shah. Just one mile from the bank of Sutlej, the Sikhs attacked the Afghans. The Afghans immediately got ready to fight. Ahmad Shah was in the centre. Shah Wali Khan, Jahan Khan, Shah Pasand Khan and others with 12000 troops were on the right while Naseer Khan at the head of 12000 Balauchis was on the left. The Sikhs also organised themselves in a regular battle array. In the centre was Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, close by him was Jassa Singh Ramgarhia looking like a lion. On the right was Charat Singh Sukarchakia. Jhanda Singh, Lehna Singh and Jai Singh were also with him. Hari Singh Bhangi, Ram Das, Gulab Singh and Gujjar Singh were on the left side.

The battle raged furiously causing havoc on both sides. Following the usual tactics, Charat Singh kept on firing from a distance while the Bhangis under Hari Singh rushed upon Shah Wali Khan and Jahan Khan, retired to draw the Afghans on their pursuit and then turned back to fall upon them. When the right was thus being pressed hard, Ahmad Shah asked Naseer Khan to render help to it but cautioned him that he should not be hasty in the field against the Sikhs. He should stick to the place and not pursue the Sikhs separating himself from the main body of the army. But in spite of this advice, Naseer Khan rushed upon the Sikhs and had to be called away by the Shah lest he should fall into the trap of the Sikhs. According to Dr. Ganda Singh, "While the Balauchis (the soldiers of Naseer Khan) had left their positions

in pursuit of the Sikhs, another body of the Sikhs rushed in to take their places quickly and got in between the Shah and Naseer Khan and cut off one from the other. The Sikhs then threw a cordon around the retreating Balauchis. A bloody battle ensued coming to a close with the fall of darkness.

Next day, the Sikhs again fell upon the Afghans and harassed them as usual. This day they reversed their order, their right wing became the left and left went to the right. Their number also was larger than that of the previous day. The Durrani called a halt immediately and organised his troops in the previous day's order. When the Afghans got ready to attack, the Sikhs at once resorted to a tactical flight and disappeared from the scene. When the Afghans came back to the camp to resume their march homewards, the Sikhs wheeled round them and attacked them from all sides. This caused a great annoyance to the Shah who addressed his troops thus : "Nobody should go ahead and none should move from his place, wait, the devilish foe will itself come to you. Do not step outside your ranks, but stick to your places like the Caucasus mountain. When you find that the dogs have approached you, fall on their heads."<sup>1</sup> The fight went on for some time and then with the coming of the evening, the Sikhs suddenly disappeared.

In this way, the Sikhs daily rushed upon the Afghans for seven days. While they were passing through the Jullundur Doab, attacked them in the morning, fought on through the day and disappeared on the close of the day. Qazi Nur Muhammad says, "Without any shame or modesty they would come again and again and retire with the same frequency."<sup>2</sup> But these were their tactics. As the Qazi himself tells in his book *Jang Nama*, "If their (Sikhs) armies take to flight, do not take it as an actual flight. It is a war tactics of theirs. Beware, beware of them for the second time."<sup>3</sup>

The last battle with the Sikhs was fought on the seventh day on the bank of the Beas when they finally retired, probably to prepare for their attack on Lahore.<sup>3</sup>

The Shah does not seem to have stopped at Lahore. While crossing the Chenab, the Afghans suffered a great loss in men and in baggage owing to the strong currents of water.<sup>4</sup> On the bank of the Jhelum, Kabuli Mall was permitted to return to the government of Lahore. There the Shah also permitted Naseer Khan

1, 2, 3. *Jang Nama*, Statement No. 40.

4. For details of the havoc wrought upon them by the flood, refer to *Jang Nama* by Qazi Nur Muhammad.

of Kalat to leave for his country. Naseer Khan submitted some demands which were all granted, including the demand of the territory of Sial (Quetta). The Shah desired to give him territories of Chenab, Jhang, Multan and the Deras but neither he nor any one else was prepared to accept them, apparently for fear of their inability to hold them against the rising power of the Sikhs.

After this the Shah reached Afghanistan.

## Chapter 12

# SIKH-AFGHAN CONTEST

### Assumption of Sovereignty

#### Loss of the Punjab

After the Durrani invader retired to his country, the Sikhs got once again a free opportunity of extending and consolidating their territorial acquisitions.

On the Baisakhi day (10th April 1765), they decided by a Gurmata to take possession of Lahore. Kabuli Mall who had been appointed governor was at Jammu, recruiting two thousand Dogra musketeers for service in Lahore, Sardar Lehna Singh and Gujjar Singh Bhangi moved from Ramgarh-Waniyeke at the head of two thousand Sikhs and, with the assistance of some residents of the village of Baghbanpura who were employed in the fort, entered it through an opening and established themselves on April 16, 1765. Amir Singh the nephew of Kabuli Mall and incharge of the city in his absence issued out next morning from his mansion and fired a few gun shots on the city wall. Tara Singh of Muzang rushed out with a band of only twenty-five men and captured Amir Singh and dispersed his half-hearted followers. Sobha Singh Kanhiya also joined the Bhangi Sardars and they divided among themselves the city and its neighbourhood. Sobha Singh got the south of Lahore as far as Niaz Beg. The eastern portion of Lahore including the Haveli of Kabuli Mall fell to the share of Gujjar Singh while the rest including the fort and Badshahi Masjid was assigned to Lehna Singh. Thus passed the capital of the Punjab into the hands of the Sikhs.

Soon after, the plunder of the city of Lahore started. At this, Chaudhari Rupa alias Bishan Singh and Maharaj Singh, the grandsons of Diwan Surat Singh, Mir Nathu Shah, Hafiz Qadir Bakhsh and Mian Muhammad Ashiq and other grandees of the city waited up on the Sardars and beseeched that "the city is called the Guru's cradle. If you look after it, you will prosper, but if you

ruin, no profit is going to accrue to you." The Sardars impelled by their innate respect for the Guru at once issued a proclamation that none was allowed to plunder/ruin the city. Any deviant would be suitably punished. The Sardars themselves rode through the bazaars of the city and beat the offenders with the result that peace was established in the city.

Just at this time, Charat Singh Sukarchakia rushed to the city along with 2000 soldiers to demand a share in the spoil. The Sardars in occupation of the city were not willing to oblige him, nor did he deem appropriate to enter into a scuffle with them. He, therefore, considered it prudent to take possession of Zamzama gun which lay in Shahi Burj of the fort of Lahore. The Sardars did not object to his taking possession of the gun, which he took to Gujranwala, his headquarter.

The Sikhs, at this juncture, issued their coin which marked the sovereignty the Sikhs now possessed as also the spirit of prayerfulness which gripped the minds of the Sikhs. The coin bore the inscription borrowed from the seal of their first ruling chief Banda Singh (1710-16). The inscription was as under :

Degh-o-Tegh-o-Fateh-o-Nusrat-i-Bederang  
Yaft As Nanak Guru Govind Singh.

[The kettle and the sword—the symbols of service and power—victory and ready patronage have been obtained from Gurus Nanak-Gobind Singh.]

The meaning of the word 'Deg' on the Sikh rupees has generally been misrepresented. Colonel Sleeman in his book *Rambles of an Indian Official* (II, 223) translates it as 'the pot victory', which obviously is ridiculous and meaningless. Cunningham and Shri Gokal Chand Narang render it into 'Grace', conveying only partially the sense of 'Deg'.

Deg literally means a huge cauldron, always used in Guru Ka Langar (free kitchen) run by the Sikhs in fulfilment of the injunction of their Gurus which stated that none should remain hungry and anyone irrespective of caste, creed or worldly status can partake of Guru ka Langar. It should be considered a temple of Bread, symbolising the God's essential characteristic of feeding His people. In Sikh parlance, Deg, therefore, connotes 'free kitchen run as a Temple of Bread' and is necessary adjunct of religious life of the Sikhs evidently with the aim of cultivating virtues of

1. Translated from Persian to English by Dr. Ganda Singh.  
Ganesh Dass, *Chahar Gulshan-i-Punjab*, pp. 177-78.



hospitality, charity, service and equality. Dr. Hari Ram Gupta explored that in those days, almost "every Sikh chief not only maintained a Langar (free kitchen) of his own but also considered it a merit to serve with his own hands."

Only after 1849, the individuals abandoned running 'Langar', generally speaking, although even up to date every Sikh considers it a sacred duty to offer meals whenever anybody calls upon him. All Gurdwaras run 'Langar' as an integral part of their religious service. If the Sikhs as a whole are still noted all over India and even abroad as the most hospitable lot, the credit goes to the concept of Deg and the institution of 'Guru Ka Langar'.

Next, the Sikhs turned their attention to Ala Singh who during the seventh invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali had submitted to him. His submission to the Shah, the inveterate enemy of the Sikhs, was considered as national disgrace by the Sikhs, Accordingly, a punitive force was sent against Ala Singh under the command of Hari Singh Bhangi. In the battle that took place near the village of Lang, Hari Singh Bhangi was killed. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, however, got effected compromise between the Patiala chief and his brothers-in-faith. Shortly after, Ala Singh died in August 1765 and was succeeded by his grandson, Amar Singh.

The Sikhs were so much emboldened that they carried their arms in all directions and established their rule. They even penetrated into the Jamuna-Gangetic Doab, ravaged the territories of Najib-ud-Daula and measured swords with the Marathas on behalf of Jawahar Singh of Bharatpur.

### **Eighth Invasion of Abdali (November 1766)**

Ahmad Shah Abdali was much upset at the disquieting news from the Punjab and once again he resolved to restore his authority in the Punjab or to quote Shah Wali Khan's words "to extirpate the ill-fated Sikhs". There are also reasons to believe that the Shah had been invited to India by Mir Qasim of Bengal to restore him to the throne of Murshadabad of which he had been deprived by the English.

The Shah crossed the Indus in the last days of November 1766 and arrived unopposed at Behgy about ten Kos from Rohtas. Here Ballam Singh and some other Sikhs had raised a number of strongholds with garrisons of seven-eight thousand horse, but in the absence of a common command, they were easily overpowered by the Afghans and a number of them were slain. Another attempt

was made by the Sikhs to block the passage of the Shah, but this too was a failure.

The Shah, by easy marches, proceeded towards Lahore. Hearing of this approach, Sikh Sardars left the city of Lahore. Gujjar Singh and Lehna Singh retired to Kasur while Sobha Singh, Hira Singh and Ajaib Singh made for Pakpattan. The advance guard under Jahan Khan, Barkhurdar Khan, Arz Begi and Darvesh Ali Khan occupied the city on the 2nd December 1766, the Shah encamped at Mahmud Buti, a suburb of Lahore.

This time, the Shah seemed to have been convinced of the futility of his policy of annihilating the rising Sikh power. He thought it prudent to harness the Sikhs into his service.

In consonance with his policy, when a deputation of the important persons of Lahore told him that Lehna Singh was a good and sympathetic ruler who made no distinction between the Hindus and the Muslims, he addressed a letter to Lehna Singh offering him the governorship of Lahore together with a present of dry fruits of Kabul. The latter sent Rahmat Ullah Beg of village Modah declining the invitation on the ground that in obeying him he would fall in the eyes of his co-religionists. Lehna Singh returned his fruits also and sent him instead a quantity of an inferior kind of grain, stating that the fruits were the food of kings, while he lived on the grain sent to him as a sample. A week later, the Shah appointed Dadan Khan brother of Maulvi Abdullah, governor of Lahore with Rahmat Khan Rohilla at the head of 1500 horse and foot as his deputy and marched towards Sirhind.

Leaving his heavy baggage and family in the charge of his brother-in-law at Lahore, the Shah moved out of his camp at Mahmud Buti on the 29th December and arrived at Amritsar on the 30th December, 1766. Jahan Khan who had been sent here from the neighbourhood of Lahore three days earlier was ordered to stay there while the Shah moved out on the 1st of January, 1767 in the direction of Jandiala wherefrom he marched to Jalalabad with a view to encamping near Vairoval.

Just at this time Charat Singh, Hira Singh and Lehna Singh fell upon the Shah's camp at Lahore and prepared to lay siege to it. An urgent call was sent to the Shah who immediately hurried back to Lahore. The Sikhs, in the meantime, had slipped away beyond his reach.<sup>1</sup>

1. *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, ii, 16a, 20, 36, 65, 108a.

Thus circumstanced, the Shah revised his former policy vis-a-vis the Sikhs. He now gave up the idea of dispossessing them of their territories and desired to rule the Punjab through them. To do so, he wrote to Jhanda Singh, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Khushal Singh and other Sardars on the 15th of January, 1767 from the neighbourhood of Nur-ud-Din Kot to the effect "that if they were desirous of entering his service, they should come and join him, but if they had any hostile intentions, they should meet him in the field." The Raja of Chamba and Saadat Yar Beg of the family of Adina Beg tried to persuade the Sikhs to negotiate with the Shah; but the Sikhs refused to entertain any idea of negotiations. They knew that the Shah would soon be compelled to return to his own country and that they would then resume their old possessions.

On the 17th January, 1767 the Sikhs worsted Jahan Khan in the neighbourhood of Amritsar when in response to the wishes of his master, he issued out of his camp with the Durrani vanguard of about fifteen thousand horse plundering the villages. The attack of the Sikhs was led by Jassa Singh, Hira Singh, Lehna Singh and Gujjar Singh. Five to six thousand Durrans were killed and wounded and Jahan Khan was forced to retreat. At this juncture, the Shah himself marched to the assistance of his commander. The Sikhs at once disappeared in the direction of Lahore. The furious Shah ordered the demolition of the buildings of Amritsar and the neighbouring forts. Four to five thousand Sikhs were also put to the sword.<sup>1</sup>

From here, the Shah proceeded towards the Jullundur Doab, sending expeditions in all directions to capture and punish the Sikhs. The Sikhs, on their part, did not allow Shah any rest. They hovered round the main army of the Shah which was constantly harassed. Twenty thousand of the Sikhs fell upon Naseer Khan Baloch and inflicted a defeat on him in a pitched battle. They also waylaid a caravan of three hundred camels laden with fruit and cut the Afghan escort to pieces. The Sikhs also fell upon the convoy of Raja of Chamba near Talapur carrying grain of the Shah.

"The Shah's influence is confined merely to those tracts which are covered by his army. The Zamindars appear in general so well-affected towards the Sikhs that it is usual with the latter to repair by night to the villages, where they find every refreshment. By day they retire from them and again fall to harassing the Shah's troops.

---

1. *Ibid*, ii, 65.

If the Shah remains between the two rivers, the Beas and the Sutlej, the Sikhs will continue to remain in the neighbourhood, but if he passes over towards Sirhind, the Sikhs will then become masters of the parts he leaves behind him."<sup>1</sup> The Shah reached Ismailabad about twenty miles south of Ambala where Najib-ud-Daula joined him and advised him not to proceed towards Delhi. In Abdali's march to Delhi, many new factors were likely to come up. Since the envoy of Mir Qasim was in the camp of Shah, the British were much upset. They feared that the relations they had established with the Wazir (Shuja-ud-Daula) and Shah Alam would be entirely upset if they joined the Shah. They, therefore, became very active to prevail upon Wazir and Shah Alam to refrain from waiting upon the Shah. The Marathas were likewise urged to form a league against him and full support of the British was assured to them. Furthermore, the spell of the invincibility of Durrani arm was broken by the stout opposition offered to him by the Sikhs and by the reverses, however minor, his troops had suffered at their hands. This brought about a change in the attitude of the Indian chiefs who loathed to act like wax figures. Najib, therefore, was foreseeing strong opposition to Abdali. Moreover, he feared that there would be general flight if the Shah proceeded to Delhi. He, therefore, advised the Shah to drop the idea of proceeding to Delhi. The Shah accepted the advice and decided to move homewards. He left Ismailabad on the 17th March, arrived at Ambala on the 18th and then moved on to Sirhind.

Najib-ud-Daula paid two lakhs of rupees to the Shah who was pleased to grant the governorship of Sirhind to his son, Zabita Khan. Raja Amar Singh who was the owner of the place was called upon to pay a sum of nine lakhs of rupees, which was said to have been due from him since his grandfather's confirmation in the government of the territory in 1765. Najib had a mind to arrest Amar Singh in case the stipulated amount was not paid by him. At this, Rani Fatto (Fateh Kaur), widow of Ala Singh secretly visited Shah Wali Khan and requested him to use his good offices for the release of his grandson from the hold of Najib. Shah Wali interceded on behalf of the Patiala chief and the Abdali not only granted him freedom but also the government of Sirhind and title of Raja-i-Rajgan.

In grateful acknowledgment of these favours, Amar Singh

---

1. *Calender of Persian Correspondence*, ii, 161a.

struck coins in the name of the Shah and added the word 'Bamezei' the name of the tribe of Shah Wali Khan to his own name on the seal.<sup>1</sup>

Continuing his march, the Shah reached Machhiwara. But just as the Shah proceeded by slow steps on his journey to Lahore, to his utter exasperation, the Sikhs entered the country of Najib and started plundering it. Jahan Khan was immediately sent to the support of Najib. The Sikhs got the news of his advance four gharis beforehand and crossed over to the other side of the Jamuna on the 19th of May, 1767. Those who remained behind were put to the sword. A Sikh Sardar was killed in the skirmish and Sardar Baghel Singh Karor Singhia was wounded. Having successfully finished this campaign, Jahan Khan returned to the Shah's camp in the course of seven days.

As the plains of the Punjab burnt with the heat of the summer and the rivers of this land started swelling, Ahmad Shah decided to put a hasty end to his activities in this country. He appointed Dadan Khan as the governor of Lahore and returned to his own country leaving his power in the Punjab unconsolidated and easily vulnerable to the power of the Sikhs.

### **Abdali's Ninth and Tenth Invasions and Sikh Aggression**

Soon after the return of Ahmad Shah Abdali, the Sikhs were once again the masters of the capital. Dadan Khan, the nominal governor of Lahore quietly surrendered the city and fort to their former masters, Lehna Singh, Gujjar Singh and Sobha Singh.

The territories of Sirhind, as usual, remained in the possession of Raja Amar Singh and other Sikh chiefs of the Phulkian and other confederacies.<sup>2</sup> Gujjar Singh subjugated the warlike tribes of the salt range and Rawalpindi. He also defeated the Gakhar chief of Gujrat. Then he left Milkha Singh to govern this part of his territory. Milkha Singh further extended his territory. He occupied Muree Hills. Bhai Desu Singh son of Gurbakhsh Singh marched against Kaithal which succumbed after a week's resistance. About the same time, Buh Singh Singhpuria defeated Shaikh Nizam-ud-Din of Jullundur and captured the parganahs of Jullundur, Bulandgarh, Haibatpur, Patti, Nurpur and Brahmur.

1. *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, ii, 310; Khushwaqt Rai, *Tarikh-i-Sikhan*, p. 164.

2. Ali-ud-Din Mufti, *Ibratnama*, p. 281.  
Khushwaqt Rai, *Tarikh-i-Sikhan*, pp. 81-82.

In December 1767, the Sikhs entered the country of Najib once again and pillaged it far and wide. Najib marched against them and defeated them near Muzaffarnagar. But as he grew old, he too lost his heart. In a letter to Queen-mother of Shah Alam II, he openly confessed his inability to meet the Sikh menace. He wrote, "But now Her Majesty must forgive her servant and not expect for what he has no ability to perform. The Sikhs have presented and they have written to all the tribes in general to join them, pointing to his weakness and encouraging them to cast him out. His Majesty will consider him now as one unable to provide for his own security here....."

Moreover, it elevated the spirits of the Sikhs so high that they now wanted to play the role of king-makers by offering to escort Shah Alam to the imperial capital. There was, however, no unity among the Sikh chiefs, and everyone of them wished to be the king-maker and hence the Emperor declined to give himself up to them.<sup>1</sup>

The Gangetic Doab thus utterly became defenceless. G.R.C. William says, "As regularly as the troops were cut, the border chieftains crossed over and levied blackmail from almost every village in the most systematic manner. Their requisitions were termed *Rakbi* sometimes euphemistically called *Kambli*, i.e. blanket money. Each of them had a certain well-known beat or circle, so well recognised and so clearly defined that it was not unusual for the peasantry at the present day to speak of some places being for instance in Jodh Singh's Patti, others to Diwan Singh's or Himmat Singh's and so on."<sup>2</sup>

Having overpowered all their enemies, the Sikhs in 1765 obtained possession of the major portion of the Punjab, extending in the east from the bank of the Jamuna running from Buriya to Karnal in the west as far as the Indus from Attock to the vicinity of Bhakhar and in the south from the neighbourhood of Multan and Sind, to the fort of Siwalak Hills in the north upto the boundaries of Bhimbar, Jammu and Kangra interspersed here and there with some petty independent chiefships. Some learned persons, out of hatred for the sovereignty of the Sikhs, commemorated the date of this event by the following chronogram

- 
1. *Calendar of Persian Correspondence* (translated by Imperial Records Department, Calcutta, ii, p. 847).
  2. William, G.R.C., *Calcutta Review*, pp. 28-29.



which gives the year 1768 A.D. "Jahane Kharab Shudh." (A world has been devastated).<sup>1</sup>

Two more attempts were made by Ahmad Shah Durrani to establish his power in the Punjab. In December, 1768, he left Qandhar. By now, the political situation had taken a new turn. The Sikhs had established themselves very firmly in the Punjab and he himself had entered the period which might be designated as the period of the decline of his health, and career. According to William, G.R.C., "He had been suffering the most excruciating pain from cancer of the nose ever since 1764, and now old age appeared to have been creeping upon him; for the loss of his martial spirit and activity were perceptible and were the common topics of conversation with both his friends and his enemies, the former looking forward with anxiety to the dissolution of their leader, and the latter regarding with great satisfaction the approaching demise of their dreaded chastiser."<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, India and especially Punjab was fast slipping away from his hands, and the soldiers had lost confidence against the Sikhs. The revenues from India had shrunk to this extent that Shah was rendered incapable of paying salaries to his soldiers regularly with the result that they became refractory. Thus circumstanced, the Shah marched back to Afghanistan.

In the beginning of 1769, the Shah led the last or the tenth expedition upon the Punjab. He crossed the Indus and the Jhelum and reached as far as Jokalian to the north-west of Gujrat. At this juncture, dissensions broke out among Shah's followers and he was compelled to return to Afghanistan.

After this, the Shah never ventured to lead another expedition into India. After two years and four months of the last invasion of India, he expired on the 14th April 1772 at Murgha. According to Muhammad Latif, "If we compare him with the majority of Asiatic rulers, we find him more lenient and less grasping than those whom

1. Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England* (1782-83) Vol. I, pp. 324-25.

Khushwaqt Rai, *Kitab-i-Turikh-i-Punjab*, pp. 98-99.

"The Sikhs secured possession and control over this country of the Punjab and everyone of them seized upon the places which he could. It seemed as if the agents of fate and destiny had distributed the land of five rivers among them by the generosity of Ahmad Shah, not by the kindness of Mohd. Shah.

2. G.R.C., William, *Calcutta Review* (1875), pp. 28-29.

he subdued; to his subjects, considerate and just to a degree; to those whom he admitted to his society, affable, hilarious and free to those who suffered in his cause, or in anyway aided him, bountiful and generous; to the poor and needy ever friendly and charitable; and to the rebellious more severe than the severest." "Ahmad Shah founded an Afghan monarchy which endured, and still finds its royal house from Ahmad's tribe, the Durrani, though it be from another clan. The fame of his house, the Saddozei Sept. of the Popalzei Durrani still evokes an Afghan sense of loyalty which to some extent even crosses international frontiers." "He had a bold and commanding turn of natural genius. He was an adept in the difficult art of management of men and tribes. Man of War indeed he was, but one disposed by nature to mildness and clemency and prone to policies of conciliation where the way lay open. He was a king who never lost the common touch. He kept up the same equal and popular demeanour which was usual with the Kha. s before there was any question of royal dignity."<sup>1</sup> Olaf Caroe in his book *The Pathan* says, "He was himself a divine, and he wrote poetry not in Persian but in Pashtu. He would have wished to be accorded the character of Salih." But so far as Punjab was concerned, he could gain nothing and he failed miserably. Besides this, he failed miserably to understand the Sikh problem.

### *Effects of Ahmad Shah Abdali's Invasions*

#### **Character of the People**

The invasions of Ahmad Shah Abdali exercised manifold effects, covering almost all aspects of life. The temperament of the people underwent a change. They became fierce, cruel, inconstant, defiant and restless in character. The furious contests for saving honour, life and property were so frequently indulged in by the people that they gradually acquired a taste for bloody actions. One feature, in the constitution of society as it then existed, percolated in the Hindus and Muslims alike, was therefore, the spirit of faction, and this spirit tinged all the transactions of life. This unhappy trait resulting in mutual quarrels, party strifes, bitter animosities and blood feuds became a part of their character.

Besides this, long years of misrule, impoverishment, and grinding oppression made the people stone-hearted and tended to

1. Mohammad Latif, *History of the Punjab*, p. 289.

increase their selfishness and coldness of manners. The universal anarchy brought the whole society within a state of disintegration. Each man had his own standard of virtue and whatever a man was able to do with impunity appeared to him right. They had not the slightest pricking of conscience in seizing the lands and property of the widows and the orphans. Cheating, forgery and unnatural offences were considered good jokes."<sup>1</sup>

The people of the Punjab were so much and so frequently plundered by the invader that they became un-economic in their habits. According to Dr. H.R. Gupta, "Nobody could look upon anything in his own possession as really his own. The money and ornaments were not secure though buried underground, because invaders knew this fact and dug up floors in search of hoarded treasure. Whatever had remained with the people and what they had gained during the intervals of the invasion, was seized by the exacting governors and plundering officials in lieu of government tax. This made the people thriftless on the one hand, idle vagabonds on the other, for they knew that they would not be able to retain the fruit of their labour."

This habit of being un-economic in spending, strengthened the impulse in a Punjabi for indulging in sexual pleasures and loose morals. The rich and wealthy were always on the look-out to replenish their *harems* with rose-limbed slave girls, not in dearth in the regular markets for the fair-coloured beauties of the northern hills which were held in Lahore, Jammu and Delhi.

### Rural Life

There were few cities in the Punjab and most of the population was centered in villages. This being so, it is in the fitness of things to evaluate the effects of Abdali's invasions on it. The perfect insecurity which resulted from the Abdali's invasions affected a village in more than one ways. Almost all the villages became conscious of their self-defence. Almost every villager learnt riding, shooting, wrestling and the use of arms. Match-locks were kept by the rich, while swords, spears, bows and arrows were found in everybody's possession. Each village was provided with a ditch and a rampart, and as a rule there was a citadel inside. There were watch towers in villages from which look-out was always kept. No sooner was dust seen rising in thickness, the alarm

1. *Karnal Gazetteer*, p. 46; *Sialkot Gazetteer*, p. 41.

drums were beaten loudly, summoning all the farmers, cow-boys and others to seek shelter within the mud-wall. The wooden planks were removed from the ditch and all were ready with match-locks and other arms to face the calamity.<sup>1</sup>

Besides this, the villagers were compelled to adopt some very striking social measures in order to secure themselves from ordinary attack. Some of the villages organised inter-marriages with their caste-fellows in such a way that the whole village secured brides from another single village. By inter-marriages and the necessity of a common cause the interests of several villagers were identified and thus leagued they were strong enough to oppose more regular and formidable foes. There are examples of such individual villages having frequently repulsed assailants.<sup>2</sup>

The need of safety and security urged the people to live in groups. Among the Baluchis, the Pathans and the Jats of the frontiers, the tribal feeling ran high because their tribal organisations had not suffered any change due to undisturbed condition of the country. The Rajputs also had retained practically the same tribal system. The Jats and Gujjars of the central Punjab who had long forgotten it also organised groups in the form of Sikh Misls or Sikh bands. Thus group-living received encouragement under the impact of Abdali's invasions; but from the part of view of progress, the tribal groups were a step backward while the group in the form of Sikh bands was a step forward because in the latter, people had transcended the barriers of blood and caste.

### **Social Authority**

The invasions of Abdali had also its effects on social authority in villages. People looked towards their tribal chiefs for safety and protection and cherished loyalty and fidelity for him. This being so, his view became weighty and in some villages, he acted as if he were supreme. The artisans, shopkeepers and traders and others followed their professions as his humble servants and dependents. In central Punjab including Doaba and a part of Malwa, the Panchayats exercised social authority. It consisted of most respectable representatives of tried virtue. It maintained perfect justice and equity in the village. It restrained the stronger and helped the weaker against any aggression. Though it was not

1. *Punjab Govt. Records*, Delhi Residency and Agency, 1807-57, Vol. II, p. 112.

2. *Ibid*, Vol. I, p. 113.

backed by any physical force, yet the social pressure brought to bear upon the offender was so over-whelming that even the most refractory member of the community heard and bore the severest punishment. In case someone disobeyed the Panchayat, he was declared an out-caste and all the members of the village community refused to associate with him for fear of the same punishment. The Panchayats, on their part, rarely did acts of misconduct and corruption. The very feeling that one was acting as a tribunal for one's own men and in that capacity was responsible to God, made one honest and just.

### Village as a Self-sufficient Unit

The sense of insecurity, scanty means of communication and the need of offering resistance to the wandering bands made the village self-dependent. Each village turned into a small, self-dependent unit. *Lambardar* exercised general superintendence over all the affairs of the village. The *Patwari* kept the accounts of the lands and registered everything connecting with it. The *Chowkidar* (watchman) apart from keeping watch at night, reported to the police regarding offenders and bad characters and suspicious persons. The school master taught the children to read and write; the Mullah led the prayers in mosques. The grocer supplied provisions, stored grain of the farmer and advanced money and corn in cases of emergency. The physician (Hakim) the washerman, the potter and Mirasi, the dancing girls and the cowboy were the other functionaries of the village. The artisans were regarded as public servants of the village community and worked as per demand of the members of the village.

### Urban Life

A very small proportion of the population of the Punjab lived in cities. Like villages they also felt the impact of the Abdali's invasions. The cities situated on the route of Abdali's campaigns suffered a lot both in respect of material wealth and mental peace. The citizens were expected to pay tributes to the invader failing which they were subjected to plunder. Cities putting up resistance to the Shah were invariably sacked and pillaged and its inhabitants were killed or humiliated. Delhi and some other cities suffered the most at the hands of the invader.

A few cities such as Sirhind, Samana and Batala which were considered as the pockets of the allies or sympathisers of the Shah

were sacked by the Sikhs who were committed to the dislodgement of the foreign invader from the Punjab.

Thus circumstanced, the citizens were bound to suffer a lot of mental agony and cases were in abundance which prove that at the mere news of the Afghan invader, they took to flight to safer places. The sense of insecurity which gripped the people of a city proved to be fatally injurious to its social health and economic soundness. The normal urban life was much upset. The artisans and the manufacturers left the cities and disposed themselves at different places thereby levelling a blow to the local economy of the cities. Lahore, Batala and various other places which previous to the period of Nadir were important industrial centres, ceased to be so. Similarly, the smiths of Sirhind famous for casting guns of high calibre left the place for Delhi. Amritsar was pillaged for more than once and its artisans migrated to safer places.

The exit of the artisans from the cities affected adversely their economy which further intrigued upon the labour class. The cities which were within the range of Abdalis, therefore, became more or less, the dwelling places of the ruling classes and of only those people who depended upon them.

### **Effect on Religious Groups**

Did the Shah's invasion benefit Islam? Not the least. Nothing was done to popularise the teachings of Islam. Even during Tinjar Shah's regime, we do not find even a single order or instruction to this purpose. Did the invasions benefit the Muslim religious groups? Even this the Shah did not accomplish. The Muslims of the Punjab except when they were in the grip of Euphoria, felt as unstable and insecure as the Hindus. They were given no special privileges in society or in new political structure. On the other hand, their religious group-feeling suffered a rude shock, when they found they had to suffer humiliation and pillages at the hands of no other than Afghan Muslims. This being so, the feeling of religion as an adhesive got weakened.

So far as Hindu religious groups were concerned, they suffered the most. Heavy taxation, slavery of their pretty women and male children and maltreatment of various sorts were the lot of the Hindu masses of those days. Feelings of honour and self-respect had almost deserted them and their mentality had become absolutely depraved. In spite of the fact they suffered humiliations and grovelled in the dust, they would sing the praises of the great



despot of Delhi in these words :

"The Lord of Delhi is God."

Not to speak of the common, illiterate and poor Hindus, even the men of learning were not free from this stigma. The historian Shiv Parsad writing about 1776 says that Ahmad Shah Durrani who invaded India ten or fifteen times in order to carry on a religious war turned India into a hell.

The Sikhs, as a religious group, underwent a great strain because the Afghan invader and even his Muslim allies in the Punjab had made them special target of their wrath. But this thing also brought consolidation and closeness among them. Unlike the Hindus, they did not feel demoralised, thanks to the Gurus' teachings which had steeled their hearts and constantly inspired them.

### **Effect on Politics**

The Afghan invasions considerably affected the politics of the Punjab. They first of all brought the Mughal rule in the Punjab to an end. The last Subedar of the Punjab who tried his best to resist Ahmad Shah in his attempts to establish Afghan rule in the Punjab was Muin-ul-Mulk (Mir Mannu). The callousness of the Mughal Emperor and the mutual jealousy of the ministers stood in the way of Mir Mannu who could not succeed. In 1751, Punjab became part of the Abdali Empire, although Mir Mannu was kept as Subedar of the Punjab. After the death of Mir Mannu, sometimes the Mughals and sometimes the Afghans remained the Subedars of the Punjab. To put an end to the prevalent disorder in the Punjab due to the rapid changes in the personnel manning viceroyalty, Ahmad Shah Abdali invaded for the fourth time and compelled the Mughal Emperor to cede Punjab, Sindh and Kashmir permanently to the Shah. After this, the Shah appointed his son Timur Shah for the administration of the Punjab. His commander-in-chief, Jahan Khan was to assist him.

Immediately after, Adina Beg who wanted the Subedari of Punjab for himself brought the Marathas to the Punjab political scene. They drove Timur Shah out of the Punjab and established their supremacy. Upto this time, the Sikhs had also become conscious contenders for the paramountcy in Punjab affairs. Thus the Marathas, the Afghans and the Sikhs started a triangular struggle which continued for about a decade. In 1761, in the third battle of Panipat, Ahmad Shah Abdali defeated the Marathas and removed them from the scene. In the process, the Afghans themselves

suffered a lot. After this in the sixth decade of the 18th century, only two powers viz., the Afghans and the Sikhs were left to struggle for the supremacy in the Punjab. In spite of the Shah's sustained efforts, the Sikhs could not be knocked out; on the other hand, due to certain factors (details have been discussed in the foregoing pages), they succeeded in compelling the Shah to give up the idea of establishing Afghan rule in the Punjab.

Thus the Afghan invasions helped the rise of the Sikhs by knocking out the Mughals and the Marathas out of the political scene of the Punjab and making the contest straight between the Afghans and the Sikhs. In this duel contest, again the Sikhs got upper hand because of the serious mistakes of the Afghans and sagacity of the Sikh leadership. The alien content as the Afghans were, also helped the Sikhs to consolidate their rise.

### Effect on the Economy of the Punjab

Every time Abdali marched into India, he inflicted great loss on the economy of the Punjab. He robbed Punjab of lakhs and crores of rupees, of gold, silver, rubies, diamonds and pearls. The whole wealth of the Punjab was drained off to Afghanistan. Besides this, the invasions bred tendency to cultivate that much land which was just sufficient for sustenance or which could be protected from the inroads of the lawless elements. This, in its turn, adversely affected the agricultural production. A good deal of land belonging to the village was left uncultivated and it was used as a grazing ground for the cattle. Only that portion was brought under the plough which could easily be protected by the village. It was situated in close vicinity.

Commerce and industries also felt the pinch of the Afghan invasions. The sense of insecurity and anarchical conditions impeded the growth of trade in terms of quantum and quality. The roads were bad. Rivers were unbridged. Travelling was difficult as well as unsafe. The routes were infested by robbers and thieves and even great *serais* where the travellers halted in the night were not out of danger. On the establishment of Sikh rule in the plains of the Punjab, the situation with regard to trade underwent an improvement to some extent. Forster says, "Merchants of every nation or sect, who may introduce a traffic into their territories, or are established under their government, experience a full protection, and enjoy commercial privileges in common with their own subjects. At the same time it must be noticed, that such

immunities are granted only to those who remain amongst them, or import wares for the immediate supply of the Sicque markets. But the foreign traders, or even travellers, who attempt to pass through the Punjab, are often plundered and usually ill-treated."

Exactly because of the reasons spelt above, the position of foreign trade was also not happy. The countries situated in the north-west and south of it were sparsely populated and did not therefore hold a large number of consumers to make them good markets for the products of the Punjab. The united provinces of Agra and Oudh in the east, though a valuable market, were useless to the Punjab, because these grew the same kind of commodities. On the other hand, its river gave no access to the sea and they were also not very navigable. Therefore Punjab could not expect much of external trade; but whatever of it there would have been was almost entirely checked by the anarchy of the time. All the trade routes in the plains were closed and only a little trade was diverted to the hills, and merchants proceeding to Kashmir and Afghanistan adopted route which entered the outer range of the Shivalik hills near Dehra Dun and passed through Nahan, Bilaspur, Haripur and Jammu.

So was the case with industries. Due to the anarchical conditions, the artisans did not have peaceful time to attend to their profession. Moreover, they were often called upon to cater to the immediate needs of the political masters of the areas in which they lived. Often these demands consisted of swords, spears, guns and other such things required in connection with warfare. Because of the poverty of the menial people and the economic strain on the ruling classes—caused in great measure by the Afghan invasions—the artisans did not produce things of diverse varieties and qualities feeling that they might not be able to sell them. Many a time, an Artisan had to leave<sup>1</sup> the city to some place whom he considered safe. Since in those times, the evacuation of the artisans was not planned by some organisation, political or non-political, each chose his safe resorts according to his wishes. This thing in itself was far-reaching in consequence.

1. "The centres of population had shifted from the plains of the Punjab to the ravine tracts and submontane regions which were generally beyond the easy reach of the invader. Out of 221 villages in parganah of Karnal, the inhabitants of 178 had been wholly driven from their homes and fields."

*Journal of the Punjab Historical Society*, Vol. III, No. 2, 1915, p. 117.

Many a time, he would not return to the original place even after the danger was over. In that case he had to start his career anew and afresh. Secondly, this type of scattered resettlement of the artisans did not allow any organisation to grow, thereby disallowing the capitalistic production to take place.

### **Discomfiture of Ahmad Shah Abdali—An Assessment**

The Shah invaded the Punjab for ten times. In 1752, he annexed it to its own dominion. In 1757, he left his son Timur as his viceroy at Lahore, but the Prince could not stay in the country for more than a year. Again in 1761, after the battle of Panipat, and in 1762 after the great *Gballughara*, he appointed his own governors at Sirhind and Lahore but with no better success. Early in 1764, the Sikhs defeated the Afghan governor of Sirhind and occupied the whole of the territory to the south of the Sutlej. Ultimately the Shah was convinced that it was not possible to establish Afghan rule in the Punjab and to dislodge the Sikhs from their positions. It obviously sounds strange that the greatest general of Asia, as Ahmad Shah Durrani was, should feel helpless against the Sikhs. But for a student of history, there is nothing astonishing because there were certain important factors which operated in such a way that failure of Ahmad Shah Abdali against the Sikhs was, more or less, a historical certainty.

The first such factor was the inability of the Shah to identify and then to remedy the maladies of the people. Doubtless, he won victory against the Mughals, but the victory which he got was over the Mughal ruling class which was extremely unpopular among the generality of the bulk of the people consisting of free-peasants and tenant-peasants. These were exploited right and left by the ruling class comprising the Mansabdars which upto this period had degenerated into Jagirdaris, pure and simple, interested only in their revenues, which they extorted with impunity. This being so, the people did not give their willing support to their Mughal masters, although there were times, when these people rallied round themselves the general people by playing upon their religious prejudices. Ahmad Shah Abdali, to establish his rule on permanent basis, ought to have learnt a lesson from the logic of circumstances and have tried to win over the hearts of the people. Since he failed to do so, the inevitable happened. The people, by experience, reached the conclusion that Ahmad Shah Abdali was not the person to provide safety, security and prosperity to them and hence

alienated themselves from him.

The aforesaid belief of the people was strengthened by the wholesale plunder resorted to by the Afghan soldiers during their campaigns and in the event of their conquests. Their plunder did not consist of material wealth only, in it were included women also who were often sold against cash and also dis-honoured; as for example, Maratha General's female captivities were sold against the payment of Rs. 10 for each woman. Quite a few thousand of women were relieved by the Sikhs on the bank of the river Sutlej when Ahmad Shah was returning home after the loot and plunder of Delhi. The memory of the pitiable condition of the Indian women in the train of the Shah to be taken away from their native land has been faithfully preserved in various folk-lore of the Punjab. According to Muhammad Latif, "The women abused by them in an abominable manner fled from them and always preferred a well to an Afghan. Girls of twelve and fourteen have become unmarriageable in their diabolical hands. The male captives also suffered a lot at the hands of the Afghan soldiers. The author of *Siyar-ul-Mutakbrin* unveils the atrocities committed by the Afghans on a male prisoner. He says, "They bore a hole in his shoulder, under the clavicular bone so remarkable in it, and passing a thong or rope through it, make the end of it fastened to their saddle and then mount and trot away." The reaction of the people to the Afghan invasion is well-preserved in the following adage which is translated as under :

"What we actually eat and drink is our own; The rest is all Ahmad Shah's."

(Ahmad Shah, according to the popular belief left nothing for the people except what was actually in their mouths but swallowed up everything himself.)

In view of all this it is not difficult to surmise that Ahmad Shah Abdali aroused hatred and ire against himself and was regarded a mere plunderer.

The Sikhs, on the other hand, were cautious enough to win over the sympathy of the people. They took care that they should not be treated as believing in sectarianism. This is why that in spite of the fact that cries of holy war (Jehad) were raised against them, they did not lose the balance and did not indulge in the indecent and foolish game of killing Muhammadans. It goes to the credit of the Sikhs that they did not allow the struggle against the Mughals or the Shah to degenerate into a vendetta against the Muslim



population. There were cases when they did not feel any compunction while killing the Muslims but, on analysis, it would be clear that those people either belonged to the ruling class or to the priestly class who was hand in glove with the former. This was one of the major causes that the Muslims were not inherently opposed to them. In 1766 a deputation of the leading citizens of Lahore waited upon the Shah and submitted that Lehna Singh was a kind-hearted benevolent ruler, that in spite of authority and power, he made no distinction between the Hindus and the Muslims, and that on the day of Id-ul-Zuha he bestowed turbans on the Qazis, the Muftis and Imams of the Muslim Mosques and treated all other people with respect and regard. Besides, the Sikhs paid due respect to women-folk and abhorred any act of dishonour to them. In 1763, on the appeal of Brahmins, the Sikhs did not hesitate to shed their blood in a war against Usman Khan of Kasur to retrieve the wife of one of them whom he forcibly kidnapped.

Besides this, the Sikhs were responsive to the aspirations of the people. They being mostly themselves peasants, did not believe in their exploitation by raising excessive levies or denuding the people of what they had. In the villages which came under their *Rakhi* (protection) they did not charge more than the stipulated 1/5th of the total revenue in lieu of their promises to safeguard the villagers against any invader as also to ensure peace and prosperity to them. This being so, their movement became mass-oriented as well as mass-based. Eventually the Sikhs who conducted such a movement could not be easily crushed or defeated.

George Thomas writes, "Within his own domains each chief is lord paramount. He exerts an exclusive authority over his vassals even to the power of life and death and to increase the population of his districts he proffers a ready and hospitable asylum for fugitives from all parts of India. Hence in Sikh loiterers that the government be arbitrary there exists much less cause for oppression, than in many of the neighbouring states." Hegel in his travels observed, "In Truth, there is very little oppression on the part of the governors and *thanedars*."

The Shah had no such allies as could either keep down the Sikhs in the Punjab or successfully oppose the Marathas in the neighbourhood of Delhi. The Afghans of Malerkotla were too weak to be of any help to him. Besides they owed their existence primarily to the grateful regard of the Sikhs for the memory of Nawab Sher Mohammad Khan who had expressed sympathy for



the young ones of Guru Gobind Singh done to death by Wazir Khan of Sirhind, and to the goodwill of Phulkian States who stood by them in days of danger. The Bangash Rohillas of Furrukhabad were too insignificant to be counted upon, and their co-operation with Shah was never active. Shuja-ud-Daula of Oudh was too far away from the Punjab to render help quickly. Najib-ud-Daula alone actively associated himself with the Shah during his invasions of India. But he was only a petty chief, with limited resources. Whenever the Shah came to India, he, not unoften, had to fight Najibs' battles. He was thus more a liability to the Shah than an asset.

Another factor responsible for the failure of the Shah was the difficulty posed by the falling revenues and continuously increasing expenditure on account of ever-increasing number of soldiers. His income from the revenue within his own country was not much because of low rate of taxation. He did not like to increase the rate of taxation because he apprehended that he would lose the reputation of being called as a kind-hearted king. The only hope of meeting the deficit was the huge booty which he was likely to lay his hands upon during his campaigns into India; but this source too failed him because after 1762, the opposing forces became so strong that it was not possible to get the booty as expected. His Indian revenues also did not pour in as it was expected. Amir-ul-Umra Najib-ud-Daula himself who controlled the Indian Empire as plenipotentiary of his master, the Durrani Emperor, paid him only two lakhs out of a sum of two crores and eighty lakhs due as tribute for seven years. This being so, it became very difficult to meet salary bills of the soldiers with the result that they were getting refractory and they openly mutinied when the Shah undertook the ninth invasion of India.

The Shah had a vast army of one hundred and twenty thousand horse, including the contingents of his vassals and tribal chiefs. This army was formidable and courageous and won great glory for the Shah and Afghanistan. But the Shah's conviction that the spoils of the war must be distributed among his men as they are partners in his gains, made the soldiers avaricious and lustily-greedy. This was one of the reasons that the Afghan soldiers committed excesses during Abdali's campaigns in India. This very habit was responsible for loosening the discipline in the army in later stages. On the other hand, the Sikhs were inspired soldiers with commitment to the people that they would liberate the land

from all types of tyrants. They were not mercenary in outlook, they fought for the cause. Their internal vigour consisting of their dogged faith in themselves and in the prophecy of Guru Gobind Singh that they would rule one day, sustained them against the Afghan soldiers as also against the Mughal Government's determination to suppress them.

Furthermore, the Shah's objective in conducting campaigns to India was limited. He desired to make only Punjab as the part of Afghanistan and that too for supplying finance and provisions to his country. If he attacked Delhi or fought against the Marathas, his purpose was to have an undisputed hold on the Punjab. But the tragedy was that he did nothing to win over the Punjabis to his rule. Simply to plunder them or to overawe them with sabre-rattling was not enough.

Besides this, it was unfortunate for the Shah that he did not understand the true nature of the resistance in the Punjab. He was, in fact, not facing the revolt of a section or of an individual but a revolution in which the whole Punjabi nation was taking part—the Sikhs actively and others passively. To counter such movements with force alone could not be but futile; he should have made efforts to win over the people by other means by impressing upon them that he would give better government and better peace and better living. He tried to countermine the opposition by raising the bogey of Islam but he failed to understand that the cry of holy war (Jihad) had not that appeal which once it had. People, in general, had seen for themselves that such wars were often fought to safeguard the vested interests.

Another supplementary cause of the failure of the Shah was the occasional rebellions and risings at home and in Khurasan which every time demanded his personal attention and immediate withdrawal from India. Whenever the Durrani leader left his state for attack on India, at some place, revolts broke out. Due to that disturbance, he had to go back leaving his Indian conquests in a state of instability. When he went back to Afghanistan, the Sikhs came out of their jungles and their mountain-resorts and plundered his baggage and equipage. Every raid of theirs brought fame to them and eventually it became fixed in the minds of the people that the Sikhs were capable of holding—even defeating the Afghan hordes.

He had also to reckon with the tribes inhabiting the territory around Peshawar. According to Olaf Caroe, "During all these

campaigns Ahmad Shah experienced much trouble in and around Peshawar and his communications through the passes were often subject to interruption as had been those of Nadir Shah. Elphinstone tells that Ahmad Shah gave all the eastern tribes the name of 'Berdooranees' but this nomenclature if ever used, is never heard today. In dealing with these tribes he enjoyed certain advantages. The prestige of his Afghan origin, the new Afghan Kingdom he had built above all his enlistment and enrichment of the tribesmen by the grant of service in his army, enabled him to surmount danger which had threatened to submerge even the armies of Nadir. But even he, the first and foremost powerful of Afghan kings never sought to subject to his administrative control the mountain tracts of the Karlanri tribes or even the valley of Swat."

Another factor that contributed to the failure of the Shah was the sterling qualities of the Sikhs. They possessed remarkable elasticity of character, the power to adapt themselves to all circumstances, and expansive and contractive principle susceptible of being adjusted to the requirements of the moment. They possessed sufficient vigour of body and mind to withstand the changes of climate. The burning sun, heavy rains, freezing winter and rough weather exercised no deterring influence on them. Nor did they feel dampened at the utmost persecution which they underwent at the hands of their enemies. They had the capacity for maintaining balance even amid never-ceasing anxiety, restless movement, ever changing scenes and circumstances.

The defeats did not despirit them nor did the victories swell their head. They attributed their victories to the Guru's Grace and their set-backs to His Will. This was the reason that they remained humble, simple and quiet and proved themselves true faithful followers of the Guru in playing the part of a hero in times of misfortune and that of good fellow (Bhai) in halcyon days. They seldom resorted to the cold-blooded murder even of their enemies and respected the chastity of women as their faith and honour. In this connection the evidence of Qazi Nur Muhammad is very valuable. The Qazi is the bigoted author of *Jang Nama* and came in the train of Ahmad Shah Abdali in A.D. 1764 to fight against the Sikhs. He uses most offensive expressions for the Sikhs, their religion and their Gurus but still he was compelled to admire them. He says :

"They never kill a coward and do not obstruct one who flees from the field. They do not rob a woman of her gold

and ornaments, may she be a queen or a slave-girl. Adultery also does not exist among these 'dogs'. None of them is a thief. A woman whether young or old is called by them a 'Burhiya'—one who has retired from the world. The meaning of 'Burhiya' in Hindi language is an aged woman. The 'dogs' never resort to stealing and no thief exists among them and they do not keep company with the adulterer and the thief.<sup>11</sup> Obviously such people were the beau ideal of a human being and were popular among the people of the Punjab.

Furthermore, as regards bravery and fighting skill, they were inferior to none. No superiority of their enemies in number, no stroke, no shot, no shell could make their hearts quail, since the Amrit, taken at the time of initiation, bound each one to fight single-handed against millions. They could ply their swords, pliant as a carve and sharp as a razor, with perfect ease and dexterity while in the discharge of match-locks they were invariably dead shots.

The following quotation from *Jang Nama* is an eloquent testimony to the skill of the Sikhs in handling weapons, "Do not call Sikhs 'dogs' because they are lions and brave like lions in a battle-field..... If you cherish a desire of learning the art of war, come before them in the field..... You may know that their title is Singh (lion) and it is injustice to call them 'dogs'. O youth, if you are ignorant of the Hindi language (I can tell you that) the meaning of Singh is lion. In fact they are lions at the time of battle and when in festivities they surpass Hatim (in generosity). When they take hold of Indian sword in hand, they gallop from Hind upto the country to Sind. Nobody, however strong and wealthy, dares to oppose them. When they hold the spearhead upward, they break to pieces even the Caucasus Mountain. When they bend a bow they set in it the foe-killing arrow. Then they pull it upto the ear, the body of the enemy trembles like a cane. If their hatchet strikes a coat of mail then this coat of mail itself on the body of the enemy becomes a shroud. The body of each of them looks like a hillock and in grandeur excels fifty men. Behram Gor (a Persian Hero) killed wild asses and could frighten tigers. If Behram Gor comes before them, he also would admit their superiority."<sup>12</sup>

1. Qazi Nur Muhammed, *Jang Nama*, statement No. 50, produced by Souvenir issued by S.G.P.C. in 1995 in connection with the world Sikh meet.

2. Qazi Nur Muhammed, *Jang Nama*, statement No. 50.

As regards war strategy, they followed hit and run methods. They would suddenly appear and strike the enemies either at the flanks and run away immediately. In the words of Qazi Nur Muhammad, the author of *Jang Nama*, "O hero; if their (Sikh's) troops take to flight do not consider it a defeat. It is a trick of their mode of war. May God forbid the repetition of such a fraud. The resort to this deception in order to make the angry enemy grow bold and run in their pursuit. When they find them separated from their main body and away from help and reinforcement, they at once turn back and give them the hardest possible time." During the seventh invasion of the Shah, the Sikhs took to flight by way of cunning from before Naseer Khan, they turned back from a distance and surrounded the Khan in a circle. Naseer Khan was so much pressurised that he had to alight from the horse and save his life with great difficulty. No doubt the Shah was a great general, but could not cope with this method of the Sikhs and in the last three invasions, it seems as if he were fighting only defensive battles.

Besides this, the Sikhs were well conversant with the ground, the environment, the topography and geography of the land while Afghans did not possess that much knowledge. This was the reason while the Sikhs at the time of retreating, were always successful in reaching safely to their hide-outs in some hill or far-flung territory, the Afghans felt at their wits ends as to how they should pursue them.

Besides this, the Sikhs had unflinching faith that they would never be defeated, that they are the members of the Panth in which the Guru resided, and as such, is beyond death. They never allowed their private feelings, desires, loves, sorrows, likes and dislikes to come between them and the good of the Panth. A true Sikh let his body be cut to pieces when fighting for his faith, nay he considered dying in battle a means of salvation. He devoted his head, heart, body and everything dear to him to preserve the influence of his Panth. Death, in all its forms, steadily looked him in the face more often than we can imagine, but a Sikh maintained a calm, cheerful and delightful demeanour, and muttered slowly "Nanak Das Sada Qurbani" (Thy servant, O Nanak, stands ready for sacrifice). Thus was the noble expression of their spirit.

'Panth' according to the Sikhs was not an aggregate of the people alone, it was a living reality, a moving force embodying the people known as Sikhs and committed to a particular ideology,



known as Sikhism which had a comprehensive programme for the regeneration of society and individuals. The experience shows that the people imbued with some sort of ideology which integrates the people and ensures benefits to them are very difficult to suppress or finish. No wonder, the Sikh soldiers fought not for the petty salaries or for petty doles but they were a different lot from that of the conscripted soldiers. They served their country of their own free will. They were, therefore, full of enthusiasm, proud of their words and glorious in their death. A Sikh soldier was comforted even in the most cruel sufferings by his exaltation, the love of his country and religion, in the vows he made, and in prayers which he addressed to the *Wahguru* for the triumph of his cause.

Another factor which contributed towards the ultimate victory of the Sikhs and the failure of Ahmad Shah Abdali was the triangular contest for power in the Punjab for sometime between the Mughals, the Marathas and the Afghans. Whenever there was a clash between the Marathas and the Mughals, the parties clashed, and exhausted themselves and the political confusion which resulted, gave opportunity to the Sikhs to fish in the troubled waters and to impress upon the people that they were the only body in a position to provide security to their hearths and homes. The Mughal Government had failed to give them peace, the foreign invaders were interested only in loot and plunder, the Sikhs were the only people whom they considered as their protectors and benefactors.

No less part was played by Sikh organisations and their capable leaders such as Nawab Kapur Singh, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Charat Singh etc. etc. The Dal Khalsa was the national army of the Sikhs composed of devoted soldiers and capable leaders, committed to decisions arrived at by Sarbat Khalsa through Gurmata. Sarbat Khalsa, was the general assembly of the Sikhs that gathered at Akal Takhat on the occasions of Diwali and Baisakhi. Gurmata was the resolution passed at the meeting of 'Sarbat Khalsa'. Dal Khalsa was to implement the decisions and it goes to the credit of the Dal Khalsa that it implemented them faithfully even at the risk to the lives of its members. There was no need to remind the Dal Khalsa of its commitments to implement the resolutions, as each member of the Dal Khalsa considered it a sacred duty to do so.

The Sikh organisations were not dictatorial in their nature and working, nor did they believe in political exclusiveness. They, on



the other hand, had characteristics which enabled them to function as people's organisations. Naturally the institutions were not considered by the people as isolated islands. On the other hand, they were considered rooted in the people to function for the people. This being so, even the people other than the Sikhs did not hesitate to go to Dal Khalsa whenever they felt like seeking their help.

On the other hand, Ahmad Shah Abdali's political motive in India was king-centred or empire-centred. It did not have any programme of people's welfare as directing force. Even the campaigns of Ahmad Shah were undertaken to advance Shah's personal glory as a great soldier, to provide him with means for the maintenance of his armies and to raise his country in the eyes of the world. Obviously, such political structure was looked upon with disfavour by the people of Punjab with the result that Ahmad Shah Abdali could not succeed against the Sikhs.

In the struggle first against the Mughals and then against Ahmad Shah Abdali, Sikh women played no small part. They urged their men-folk to go ahead and participate actively in the struggle. They themselves took part in the struggle. They possessed firm determination, heroism and devotion to the programme chartered by their Gurus. George Thomas in the memoir admires the grit and wisdom of Sahib Kaur, the sister of the Maharaja of Patiala. Mai Fatto, the wife of Ala Singh, Rajinder Kaur, Sada Kaur are some other examples of Sikh ladies playing active role in Sikh struggle.

Active participation of Sikh ladies in the Sikh struggle was also a factor which never allowed the morale of the Khalsa to sag.



# **MISL POLITY AND ORGANISATION**



## Chapter 13

# MISL POLITY AND ORGANISATION

### Nature of Misl Organisation

It is indeed, very difficult to determine the nature of the Misl organisation because firstly it was never the same all the time and secondly several factors, some religious, some socio-political, mingled together in its corpus.

Even then a probe into the matter is not altogether unrewarding—rather it will bring into focus many important historical factors which are of utmost importance to understand the medieval Punjab and the part played by Sikh Misl organisation in re-shaping or remoulding it.

The renowned historian Cunningham says, "Their system (Misl organisation)<sup>1</sup> resolved itself into a theocratic confederate feudalism."

This definition or connotation has three elements :

- i) Firstly, the organisation was theocratic meaning thereby that its work was done according to religious principles and priests had a dominant voice.
- ii) Secondly, it was confederate. Cunningham says that "the Misls were connected with one another through a central league called Sarbat Khalsa which had its headquarter at Amritsar and controlled the foreign policy of the Misls. The Misls were component parts of the organisation. Every Misl was, to all intents and purposes, independent."
- iii) Thirdly, it was feudal in its structure. Cunningham says, "the obvious feudal or military notion of a chain of dependence, was acknowledged as the law and the federate chiefs partitioned their joint conquests, equally among themselves, and divided their respective shares in the same manner among their own leaders

---

1. The words in brackets are ours.

of bands, while these again sub-divided their portions among their own dependents, agreeably to the general custom of sub-infeudation."

A critical scrutiny of the above definition will show that it holds only partial truth. And, in fact, Cunningham is also conscious of this fact, since he avoids being straight forward and terse in his statement pertaining to this issue. Our opinion is that the Misl organisation was not theocratic because never in the whole range of their history, priests' directions were considered as the dictates of a ruler. Nor was their any canonical priesthood among the Sikhs who could have done this. The meetings of Sarbat Khalsa at Amritsar were never directed by the priests. They were held at Amritsar because it was hoped that the hallowed place might cause selfishness to yield to a regard for the general welfare.

The Misl organisation was undoubtedly a confederate organisation. The central governing authority of this organisation was very weak. According to N.K. Sinha, "The individuals joined the ranks of a chief or a Sardar, whom they considered deserving of their leadership on grounds of valour, experience, wealth and birth. The booty was divided in proportion to the contribution of each group of horsemen, of course the chief's portion being first divided off. There was again further sub-division among the individuals composing each group. Each held his portion in absolute independence. There was no obligation except for common purposes."

The third element that Misl organisation was feudal in character is not at all in conformity with the real facts. The Misl organisation cannot be called feudalistic because feudalism has no place where there is a supreme commander. The Sikh leaders were not bound to pay any revenue or any other thing to their chief. On the other hand, any member of the Misl could leave it and join the service of any other chief or leader of a different Misl. According to N.K. Sinha, "The Misls were the confederacies of equals. A Sikh disdained to acknowledge earthly superior. The Sardar was no doubt obeyed but there was no obligation to obey beyond what they might consider to be for their own reciprocal benefit or for the well-being of the Misl."

The Sikh Misl organisation has nothing in common with Rajput feudalism or feudalism in Europe. There were at no stage of Sikh history, a haughty noblesse as in Rajputana or in medieval



Europe. In Rajputana, the chiefs were divided into distinct grades, which showed a highly artificial state. Medieval feudal Europe also presented the picture of a graded society.

Then again in Rajputana there was a patriarchal element, the greater number of vassal chiefs claiming affinity in blood to the sovereign. There was no such patriarchal element in Misl organisation nor do we hear of an elaborate list of feudal obligations of military service. The feudal system of Europe has been described by Gibbon as the offspring of chance and barbarism. This system was certainly not feudal in the European sense. The all-pervading sense of brotherhood and a super-added theocratic outlook would not, at least in theory, allow distinctions of rank.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. A.C. Bannerjee, having strongly criticised the view of Cunningham on the grounds as given above says that the confederacy was democratic in composition but religious in its cohesive principles. According to him, the main characteristic of the Sikh confederacy was its stress on equality. All were equal in status—religiously, politically or socially—and enjoyed full freedom and equality, although they had to fight under their leader during a war. Besides this, these Misls were bound together by the bonds of common faith.

The definition is correct to a great extent; but it falls short of the ideal. It does not take cognizance of all the elements, as for instance, it does not take cognizance of the status of the Sardar in the Misl who was supreme.

We, however, feel that the modern terminology will not be able to portray Misl's true nature. It is not democratic in the modern sense of the term. We through the whole range of historical literature do not find any mention of the qualifications of a voter, electoral college, procedure of election, in the modern sense of the term. According to N.K. Sinha, "for all practical purposes, however, whether in the Sarbat Khalsa for national concerns or in the local gatherings of the Khalsa for local affairs, the few Sardars really decided matters." He, in his support, quotes reports of the Sarbat Khalsa which were held to decide important questions of foreign policy. After pursuing such reports, the celebrated scholar says, "What the Sardars wanted they spoke secretly into the ears of the ambassador."

1. N.K. Sinha, *Rise of the Sikh Power*, p. 111.

But the ordinary Sikh horseman had never any galling sensation that in public matters he had no say. His power to intervene in a debate and push forward his own views was always there. His freedom of speech was un-restrained. Naturally he could never sink in his own estimation and a really democratic element was there in the constitution. In its actual working it was an aristocracy, but in its spirit it was undoubtedly a democracy.

Moreover, it was theocratic as well, but again not in the sense the world is often understood. It was theocratic only in the sense that the confederacies were inspired by the mission of the Gurus. The Sikh Brotherhood was an established fact. It was the work of the successors of Guru Nanak. By precept and by example, the successors of Guru Nanak sought to inculcate the supreme duty among service to the Sikhs in general and the sacrifice of the individual in the general body of the commonwealth. The visible external symbols of Sikh Brotherhood, as also the habitual deference of the Gurus to the will of their disciples, made the brotherhood a power. Guru Gobind Singh gave the Sikhs a new dress, a new name and new ceremonies and a new form of initiation. Along with humility and prayer, self-assertion and extirpation of the evil-doer were preached. The Guru is reported to have uttered, "He is of the Khalsa who combats in the van, who mounts the war horse, who is ever waging battle and who is continually armed." Finally it was declared that the Khalsa is the Khalsa. N.K. Sinha says, "Now practically all that the Sikhs had been taught to revere, could be satisfied by serving the Khalsa. Already devotion to God had become merged in the devotion to the Guru and now love of God, obedience and service to the Guru and love for another—all would consist in the service of the Khalsa or the commonwealth." In this transformed system, we find an element of theocracy, along with a strong sense of brotherhood. The Sikhs were now a religious-minded warlike fraternity, intensely conscious of itself. "They assembled at Amritsar twice a year, on the Baisakhi and on the Diwali, and whatever decisions were taken in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib, they were binding on them." But at these assemblies, priests were accorded only respect and no authority to rule over or dominate others.

Besides this, the Misl organisation had an element of absolutism also. Sardars or Misdars were absolute in the running of the administration of their respective Misls. There was no regular machinery to keep the Misdar who was free in matters concerning

his Misl.

In view of all this, we regard Misl organisation, a curious blend of limited aristocracy, limited democracy and absolutism, with modified form of theocracy.

### **Sarbat Khalsa—Origin and Development**

The literal meaning of 'Sarbat Khalsa' is the whole of the Khalsa community. The term came into vogue after the creation of the Khalsa in March 1699, especially in the eighteenth century. Conceptually it was not a new coinage, rather it was another form of the concept of Panth which denoted the whole Sikh community following Guru's Path.

As the Sikh community developed and expanded, it had to face variegated problems, some at ideological level, some at socio-cultural plane and some at political level. To find out solution to these problems was a Herculean task which could only be accomplished at macro level. Therefore the whole Sikh community was required to deliberate collectively to forge strategy to tackle those problems at different points of time. Luckily, the Sikhs lost no time in addressing themselves to this purpose.

In the process they scrutinised and reflected upon their heritage and found that institutions of Sangat and Panth could help them in their difficulty. 'Sangat' and 'Panth' had acquired a unique sanctity, because the Gurus themselves had underlined their importance. In religious literature, Sangat has been considered a manufactory of good persons, a training school for all those who are committed to find truth, a repository of spiritual and social authority. The Gurus very systematically nourished this institution and invested it with many qualities calling it sacred and making it one of the basics of Sikh organisational structure. Bhai Gurdas viewed that in Sikh scheme Guru ascribed utmost importance to Sangat and Panth both as an idea and as an organisation. In 1699, Guru Gobind Singh designated Sangat as Khalsa, his own as Senapat, the court poet of Guru Gobind Singh would have us believe. The Guru had made it a tradition that all the Sangats, or the whole Khalsa would gather together at Sri Akal Takhat in Darbar Sahib complex on Baisakhi and Diwali to imbibe and reflect upon the Sikh religion and problems facing it.

The extant Sikh organisations, traditions and ideology were there for the Sikhs to make use of. They began to assemble in large numbers on Baisakhi, Diwali and sometimes at Dussehra at

Sri Akal Takhat and in the presence of Sri Guru Granth Sahib started passing Gurmata (resolutions) to take stock of the problems. These gatherings of the Khalsa acquired the designation of 'Sarbat Khalsa' representing the whole Panth. Since Panth had been vested with Guruship by the Tenth Guru, the Sarbat Khalsa, the representative of the whole Sikh community, automatically, enjoyed prestige and respect and the resolutions passed by it were also ascribed sanctity.

Who actually constituted Sarbat Khalsa—the question cannot be answered on the basis of some contemporary historical evidence because of its non-availability. But certain conclusions can be drawn on the information provided by later historical sources. Firstly it could be attended by any Sikh male or female who was free to participate in the deliberations. When the Misl came into being their chiefs called Sardars attended the meetings of Sarbat Khalsa alongwith their followers who sat behind them and spoke in the ears of their respective Sardars if they wanted some point to be pondered upon. The whole Sarbat Khalsa sat in perfect amity and in a spirit of self-surrender and dedication to their Gurus before Guru Granth Sahib in front of Akal Takhat and after deliberating upon the problems passed Gurmata—resolutions, always unanimously.

As per tradition the Sarbat Khalsa met twice a year usually and certain issues were decided upon. But usual decisions were not given the status of Gurmata. Gurmata were special decisions passed in the meetings of Sarbat Khalsa unanimously regarding some special problems. Such a meeting was called by the most influential among the Sikhs. As the 18th century opened itself, Bhai Mani Singh called such meetings. After him Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and during the late 18th century, such meetings were convened by the Akalis especially those of Shaheed Misl.

'Sarbat Khalsa' which passed Gurmata was democratic in its working and composition. The whole Sikh Panth attended the session of Sarbat Khalsa; no one, even Sikh Sardars and Misdars could claim superiority—rather all attended and participated as humble servants of the Guru. The common leadership of the Misl was elective and hence to act despotically was well nigh impossible for such leadership. Fair and frank discussions were held over national and regional problems among Sardars and decisions were arrived at with common consent. The Sikhs looked upon this institution as their most revered one, their uppermost

organisation committed to preserve corporate existence of the Sikhs and improving their moral elan.

The basic ideas kept before them by the members of the assembly of Sarbat Khalsa were those of equality, unanimity and responsibility. The idea of equality entitled every member of the community, including women to attend and participate in the discussion. The principle of unanimity was based on the belief that the Khalsa was an embodiment of the Holy Guru's presence in them. Therefore, all collective deliberations were conducted in an objective manner. Different view-points were expressed but as they were bound by a solemn pledge of being united in the presence of the Guru, the resolutions were carried unanimously.

Sarbat Khalsa chose a committee to carry on Gurmata into effect. Such committee was answerable for its work to the parent body which had the power to change it whenever it was deemed necessary. The principle of responsibility involved in this process was useful and necessary to keep the leadership on guard. However when the Sardars met under emergent circumstances in view of a grave situation, taking decisions might have been confined to a few who happened to attend. Generally anybody could attend the meeting. The resolutions were not voted upon individually or passed by majority but were carried *nem. con.*<sup>1</sup>

Sarbat Khalsa often took up the following issues :

1. To charter a particular course to meet the emergent conditions.
2. To elect a leader for organising and conducting expeditions.
3. To form combination of two or more Misls, or of the entire Dal Khalsa.
4. To resolve disputes among the Sikh Sardars.
5. To decide questions of foreign policy.
6. To settle matters regarding succession of the head of a misl.
7. To frame plans of campaigns.
8. To take stock of territorial acquisitions.
9. To decide upon the punishment of their enemies.

---

1. Fauja Singh, 'Political ideas of the Sikhs during the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries.' *Ideas in History* (Ed. Bishambar Prasad), Delhi, 1960, pp. 198-99.

10. To erect new Gurdwaras and to reconstruct the old ones.

11. To appraise the progress of Sikhism from time to time.

Sarbat Khalsa as an organisation worked effectively as long as the dangers threatening the survival of the Sikhs existed. But when such dangers were over, Sarbat Khalsa Meets became less and less and attendance became poor and non-serious. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, even during the invasions of Zaman Shah, the Sarbat Khalsa did not meet in all its strength, some of the Sardars did not attend or attended reluctantly or with a heart laden with egocentricity and 'I am-ness'.

But Sarbat Khalsa as a concept or a tradition has always persisted. In 1921 Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee was in a way response to such a concept and it was in this context the people look upon this organisation as a mini Sarbat Khalsa. The fact that in recent years, various Sikh political and social organisations have made reference to 'Sarbat Khalsa' testifies that the 'Concept' of Sarbat Khalsa has not ceased to be the part of Sikh historical memories.

### **Gurmata**

The word 'Gurmata' means the instructions of the Gurus. To begin with upto the period of Guru Gobind Singh, it was used in the sense that something that constituted Guru's instruction wa 'Gurmat' or 'Gurmata'.

All through, the Sikh Gurus had been emphasising that the Guruship had impersonal character, and this being so, they could lay claim that they were all one in spite of their being different physically. When Guru Gobind Singh expired, the Guruship passed on to the Panth or the community as a whole and to Adi Granth. Now after the physical disappearance of Guru Gobind Singh, the Khalsa and the Adi Granth were regarded as Guru. Rahitnamas make this fact amply clear. According to them, the Granth<sup>1</sup> was regarded spiritual Guru while the Panth<sup>2</sup> was considered as physical one.

Now the Gurmata naturally meant the instruction of the Panth in the presence of the Granth. This fact was also made clear

---

1. *Guru Granth Ji Manio Pargat Guran ki Deb.*

2. Let him that wishes to see me go to an assembly of Sikhs and approach them with faith and reverence; He will surely see me amongst them.  
(*Prem Sumarg*).



by Guru Gobind Singh when he was about to expire and was widely propagated among the Sikhs later on. The Guru reaffirmed that all the affairs of the Panth would be regulated by a council of five beloved ones chosen for the meeting before the sacred scripture (Guru Granth Sahib). The verdict would be called Gurmata. It was to be regarded as the judgement of the Guru. It was to be adopted by the assembly unanimously. Its implementation was binding on the whole Panth. Any infringement was to be considered sacrilegious.

After the death of Banda Singh Bahadur, the Sikhs were put to a lot of hardships, firstly by the Mughal government and later on by the Afghans of the country from across north western frontier of India. Under the circumstances, the Sikhs used to gather at Akal Takhat (the throne of the Timeless) and their assembly at Akal Takhat came to be called Sarbat Khalsa. The deliberations of the Khalsa always took place in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib. Since 'Panth and Granth' together were considered as Guru, the decisions arrived at were considered sacred. These decisions were called 'Gurmata'.

Some scholars especially non-Indians have stumbled on the facts and have drawn wrong conclusions regarding the meaning of 'Gurmata'. Polier regarded Gurmata as the 'greatest council' of the Sikhs.<sup>1</sup> James Browne used the phrase 'Grand Diet' for Gurmata and Forster referred to Gurmata as the 'Grand Convention' of the Sikhs.<sup>2</sup>

All these views betray ignorance or faulty perception of the facts. Historical evidence is available in abundance to testify that Gurmata was a decision or resolution adopted by a body of the Khalsa present at one time at a given place. The statement of Rattan Singh Bhangu and later its endorsement by Dr. Ganda Singh have finally settled the issue as for instance Dr. Ganda Singh remarks that 'Mata' literally means opinion or resolution and is called Gurmata opinion or resolution endorsed by the Guru because the Guru is believed to be always presiding over the deliberations of the Khalsa held in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib. The scholars evidently have failed to differentiate between assembly and resolutions.

Usually, the Gurmata were passed at Akal Takhat but under

1. Ganda Singh (ed.), *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, p. 61.

2. Ibid, p. 17; George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, Vol. I, p. 33.

special circumstances these could be held anywhere; the essential conditions being the assemblage of the Sikhs in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib. According to Rattan Singh Bhangu whatever the place the leaders of the Khalsa decided to meet and resolution on behalf of their followers,<sup>1</sup> it does not follow, however, that most of the important Gurmata were not adopted in Amritsar or at the Akal Takhat Sahib in Amritsar. During the eighteenth century Amritsar had become the most important centre for the collective activities of the Khalsa. When the leaders as well as their followers came to visit the Golden Temple at the time of Baisakhi or Diwali, matters of importance concerning the Sikh Panth could be discussed and resolved upon.

Whenever there was need for the passing of a Gurmata, generally the assembly session of the Sarbat Khalsa was convened by the leaders of the community at Sri Akal Takhat Sahib in which the problems were discussed and decisions arrived at.

Regarding the actual functioning of the 'Gurmata', C.F. Malcolm writes,<sup>2</sup> "When the chiefs meet on this occasion it is concluded that all private animosities cease and that every man sacrifices his personal feelings at the shrine of the general good, and actuated by principles of pure patriotism, thinks of nothing but the interests of religion and the commonwealth to which he belongs." Further he writes, "When the chiefs and the principal leaders meet, the *Adi Granth* and *Daswan Padshah ka Granth* are placed before them and they exclaim "Wah Guru ji ka Khalsa." After this the members took their seats. The prayers were then offered, at the end of which Karah Prasad, or the sacred pudding was distributed and then eaten together signifying that they were all one."

After this, the chief priest would place all the items on the agenda before the members present. Each chief came close to the other and said, "The holy book is amidst us. Let us swear by this sacred book, forget our internal troubles and be united."<sup>3</sup> After a good deal of discussion, the resolution (Gurmata) was passed and embodied in the prayer which also marked the conclusion of the proceedings of the meeting.

Resolutions were not voted upon individually or passed by

1. *Prachin Panth Parkash* (Pbi.), p. 280.

2. Malcolm C.F., *Sketch of the Sikhs*, pp. 120-23;

McGregor, *The History of the Sikhs*, p. 118.

3. Rattan Singh Bhangu, *Panth Parkash*.

majorities but were carried unanimously. There were no deadlocks and proceedings held up by the obstinacy of individual Sardars. The reason was that decisions were not made by the dead weight of numbers, but by the considered voice of the accepted leaders who could not be expected to indulge in frivolous obstructions on the face of serious challenges to the Panth. Such decisions were in fact reflected and echoed the heart-beat of Sarbat Khalsa.

The view that Sarbat Khalsa get-together was that of Sardars and Misdars or autocrats, is wrong. Sarbat Khalsa was never a meeting of big leaders, it was a conference where any member of the Panth, irrespective of status, wealth or birth could take part to reach some decision. The Sardars put up at hospices, called Bungas, erected by the leaders of the Misls around the Golden Temple. At the time of meeting, they assembled at the open space before Sri Akal Takhat, each contingent of followers sitting behind their leader and speaking through him. Whenever a fresh proposal occurred to anybody, he would communicate it to his Sardar, who alone would be the spokesman. Anyone even having no connection with any Sardar could voice his/her opinion to which the Sarbat Khalsa always gave full consideration.

Another safeguard inherent in the constitution of the Khalsa was helpful in avoiding deadlocks. No resolution could be put before a meeting of the Khalsa unless, as a preliminary condition, a solemn assurance was given by the leaders present that they were positively one in the Guru. If they had any old scores still to settle, they—as many had differences—would retire for a time to make them up and when they had done so, they would come forward and announce that they had made peace and were fit to take part dispassionately in the 'Gurmata'. Then the presiding officer of Akal Takhat would declare that, they (Khalsa) were again in the Guru and therefore, he could put the Gurmata before them. The wording of the resolution was then announced and discussion followed. The resolutions, therefore, were passed unanimously. Such assemblies were presided over by the chief designated by all the confederacies and the business was conducted by the Akalis.<sup>1</sup>

---

1. The Akalis at that time were in full charge of Akal Bunga and Akal Takhat. Such meetings were held at Akal Bunga situated in the space between Akal Takhat and Hari Mandir (refer to *Satwant Kaur* by Bhai Vir Singh).

There was no military or non-military means to enforce the obedience to Gurmata among the Sikhs. Yet rarely, at least upto 1765, the Gurmata was flouted. The decisions taken by the Panth in the presence of Guru Granth were considered to be the decisions of the Guru. And since the Guru was dearer to the Khalsa than anything else in the world, regard for the Guru was the main force behind the decisions. As a matter of fact, a Gurmata duly passed was believed to have received the sanction of the Guru and any attempt made afterwards to contravene or flout it was taken as a sacrilège.

### **Period of Gurmata**

The system of Gurmata served the Sikhs well during the darkest period of their history. The first Gurmata was held in the time of Guru Gobind Singh when it was decided that the Guru should exit the Chamkaur fortress. The last<sup>1</sup> Gurmata was held in 1805 to decide as to what course Ranjit Singh should follow in case of the dispute between Holkar and the British. After 1805 when Ranjit Singh established himself, he did not allow the institution to work as a regular political organisation. According to Bhai Vir Singh, the only other Gurmata during the regime of Ranjit Singh was held on the eve of the battle of Naushehra. The institution, however, had continued to work even up to now in religious and social matters.

Even during the hey-day of Gurmata, its scope was limited. The decisions which the Sikh leaders at Amritsar took from time to time were adhoc deliberations of voluntary gatherings and their scope was confined to matters concerning the preservation of augmentation of striking power; they stopped short of territorial occupation and rule. Quite intelligible in terms of historical circumstances, they appear to be the expression of a sense of unity<sup>2</sup>

1. Refer to *Satwant Kaur* by Bhai Vir Singh, according to which the last Gurmata was held on the event of the battle of Naushehra.
2. There were four other similar seats of Panthic authority, distributed all over India; one at Keshgarh in Anandpur, where the Khalsa was originally baptised by Guru Gobind Singh, to take cognizance of cases referred from the eastern Punjab; another at Patna, the birth place of Guru Gobind Singh, serve the needs of the Sikhs in eastern India; the third at Nanded, in Hyderabad (Deccan) where Guru Gobind Singh had expired; the fourth at Damdama to consider the cases from the area, then known as 'jungle'. These four Takhts, or thrones, were

among a considerable number of Sikh leaders at a most critical period of their history. The sense of unity was never formally institutionalised.

However after the Misdars acquired territorial and internecine feuds developed among them in the later half of the eighteenth century, its authority began to erode particularly after 1765. The meetings of the Sarbat Khalsa were not attended by the chiefs with assiduity and the requisite seriousness and consequently Gurmata began to lose its significance. According to Dr. Grewal, "The Sardars of different Misls fighting against each other, the Sardars of more than one Misl fighting against the Sardars of some other Misls and the opposing Sardars forming alliance with non-Sikh chiefs—all this characterizes the late eighteenth century Sikh politics. In the context of this type of situation, it is not difficult to reach the conclusion that Gurmata was not esteemed to the degree it was respected in the non-territorial phase of the history of the Misls."

This institution was not allowed to operate after 1805 by Ranjit Singh. He did so not by any formal order but by manoeuvring the affairs in such a way that Gurmata could not be passed and if it was passed by Ranjit Singh on the eve of the battle of Naushehra, it was done so by him to serve his own purpose and certainly not in the interest of Khalsa ideology. He did so because he did not want that at any time his authority might be challenged by the Khalsa imbued with the Khalsa ideology.

Explaining Ranjit Singh's not calling the meeting of Sardars at Akal Takhat, Teja Singh writes that it was a long awaited fulfilment of the Sikh idea; the secularisation of service—he wanted to make Hindus and Muslims feel that they were as much the people of the land as his own co-religionists. He, therefore, abolished the rule of the Akal Takhat so far as political affairs were concerned..... The Gurmata of Akal Takhat had no place in such a secular scheme. It would have put a great strain on the loyalty of the Hindu and Muslim subjects if he had still tried to rule over them by the religious edicts issued from the Mecca of the Sikhs.

Teja Singh's identification of the cause of the suspension of

---

☛ meant as centre of religious authority and appeals were addressed to them only in cases of dispute about the correctness of ritual or interpretation of doctrine. The Akal Takhat, however, combined political power with religious suzerainty, and has always been looked up as the greatest centre of Panthic control.

Gurmata is a post facto explanation. Maharaja had no idea of secularism which is a recent construct. His policy towards non-Sikhs was inspired by Sikh traditions of liberalism and humanism and certainly secularism as it is understood these days, had nothing to do with the policies of Ranjit Singh. Nor is it correct to say that the Maharaja did not need Gurmata or any Panthic organisation after having attained political power because it is an admitted fact that collective deliberations have always been key to further success and progress. The reality was that Maharaja failed to evolve certain solid bases of relationship between Gurmata and state policy. The government could, if it willed, conduct the affairs of the state according to the decisions of Panthic organisation through Gurmata. But alas it did not happen, thereby disabling 'Gurmata' to play its part in evolving a new polity. Gurmata as a concept and spirit has never died out. It has always been there pulsating and vibrating the Sikh society at local, regional, national and global levels. In 1920 a Gurmata was passed at Akal Takhat to set up Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee to manage the historical Gurdwaras.

Even later whenever any emergency arose, the Sikhs had always the inclination to sit together and reach decisions. Many such decisions were taken at local/regional levels. The people sat together before Guru Granth, discussed their problems and then passed 'Gurmatas' to which they bound themselves suo moto. Panthic Gurmatas were also passed and issued to the concerned quarters in the form of Hukamnama. Now SGPC acted as a mini Sarbat Khalsa, being the apex representative organisation of the Sikhs.

Regarding the nature of Gurmata, it cannot be considered as a political construct as in its emergence no politics was involved, rather it was a Sikh ideological construct which came into being because of the urges engendered among the Sikhs by Sikh ideology as propounded and preached by the Sikh Gurus. It epitomised reactions of Guru-consciousness among the Sikhs and hence 'Gurmata' was regarded sanctimonious. No wonder, it could not be visualised/used to further the sense of hatred or to uphold disintegrative forces such as cleavages on the basis of caste, creed, birth, wealth and status et al. Its main thrust has always been to protect and promote Sikh commonwealth, principles of equality, non-exploitative society, freedom of expression, human rights and establishment of the Khalsa sovereignty. Nor can it be termed as



purely religious, because its genesis and emergence was not ordained by the Guru. It was a construct or institution which came into existence as a creative response to different challenges, thrown up by the Brahmanical system as well as by the domination system of the Mughals and the Afghans.

Since Gurmata in its genesis and growth had intimate nexus with the Sikh religion; it became a style, an attitude at macro level. This being so, it perpetuated. Even in the present times, it is resorted to by the Sikhs, although SGPC, the apex elected body of the all Sikh adults has taken place of Sarbat Khalsa in a modified form.

Regular Gurmata were passed two times in a year i.e. to say on the Baisakhi and the Diwali. Roughly speaking 'the Gurmata were passed on the Baisakhi day related to the next year's programme with special reference to occupying of territories releasing tributes, building forts, Katras or residential quarters at Amritsar renovating, rebuilding or constructing fresh, sacred shrines. The Gurmata approved on the Diwali day pertained to the realisation of 'Rakhi' or 'Kambli' and to improving the financial condition of the Panth. The Gurmata resolved on the Diwali concerned largely with military affairs particularly those which related to the invasions of the aliens (Mughals, Afghans or Marathas) as well as to the military projects to be taken by the Khalsa Panth in the rest of the year.

Urgent cases could be taken up at any time and at any place and Gurmata could be passed. According to Giani Gian Singh and Rattan Singh Bhangu, some of the Gurmata were passed near Kasur, Sialkot, Sirhind when Tara Singh of Van village was killed in 1726 along with his comrades, the Sikhs passed a Gurmata to assert themselves and to teach the government a lesson.

Many important Gurmata were passed which were milestones in the history of the period under review. In addition to the Gurmata of 1726 about which mention has been made, the Sarbat Khalsa passed a Gurmata on October 14, 1745 according to which the Sikh Misls or groups consolidated themselves into 25 groups, each consisting of about 1000 persons. According to Dr. H.R. Gupta, this was probably the first Gurmata regularly passed by the Sikhs after a long period of persecution. This great institution gave each individual a personal share in the important national deliberations and placed within the reach of every Sikh the attainment of rank and influence. At this time, the Khalsa also created 'Dal Khalsa' which mutually combined within itself the armies of the Misls to face the

common enemy of the Panth but it represented something more; it was a sort of instrument, an apparatus to safeguard and further the cause of Sikhism as also to act as the vanguard of the Sarbat Khalsa.

With the advancement of the Sikh liberation movement, it was realised that closer union between different Misl/groups was an imperative. Accordingly, Sarbat Khalsa met on the day of Baisakhi on March 29, 1748. After a protracted discussion, a Gurmata was passed choosing Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia for the Supreme command of the Dal Khalsa which was reorganised now consisting of only twelve Misl. A Gurmata was passed at Akal Takhat on November 7, 1760, on the occasion of Diwali to occupy Lahore. On October 27, 1761 another Gurmata was passed that the supporters of Ahmad Shah Abdali including Aqil Das of Jandiala be chastised. In 1761, Ahmad Shah Abdali was going back after defeating the Marathas. The Alghazais as the Afghans were called by the Sikhs, did not display any moral scruples and made a large number of women as their captives whom they planned to carry to their country for sale or for physical abuse. The Sikhs' moral rage activated them and they gathered at Amritsar to pass a Gurmata. They resolved on a Dharamyudh or a holy war "Asan desh di dhiya, bhaina kiwen jane den." They at once organised themselves into small bands and lost no time to pursue the Afghans. They came upon them while they were crossing river Jhelum. About 30000 women who were still on the eastern side of the river were rescued. A large booty also fell into their hands. Many Afghan guards were slain.<sup>1</sup>

By a Gurmata, the Sikhs decided to get rid of Zain Khan of Sirhind as a result of which he was killed on January 14, 1764. Through another Gurmata, the Sikhs decided to sack Sirhind. In March 1765, on the festival of Baisakhi, the Khalsa assembled at Sri Akal Takhat and passed a Gurmata to occupy Lahore. We also hear of many other meetings of Sarbat Khalsa as in 1766, 1798, 1805. We also come across the Gurmata regarding the release of Bhai Tara Singh, fighting pitched battles against Nadir Shah, Ahmad Shah Abdali and Timur Shah, construction of a fort at Amritsar, sending expeditions against their enemies, according approval to Rakhī system et al.

Sarbat Khalsa which passed Gurmata was democratic in its

1 Kartar Singh Kalaswalia, *Tegh Khalsa*, pp. 167-69.

working and composition. The whole Sikh Panth attended the session of Sarbat Khalsa; no one even Sikh Sardars/Misldars could claim superiority—rather all attended it in a spirit of self-surrender and dedication to the Guru Panth. The common leadership of the Misls was elective and the elected leader never acted despotically, rather he/she held discussions over national problems with other Sardars and mostly worked according to the will and direction of other Sikh chiefs. The Sikhs looked upon this institution as their most revered one, their uppermost organisation committed solely and passionately to preserving corporate existence of the Sikhs and escalating Khalsa ideology to improve the moral elan of the whole world.

Dr. Fauja Singh while studying the nature of Sarbat Khalsa, beautifully sums up that the basic ideas kept before them by the members of the assembly were those of equality, unanimity and responsibility. The idea of equality entitled every member of the community, including women, to attend and participate in the discussions. The principle of unanimity was based on the belief that the Khalsa was an embodiment of the holy Guru's presence in them. Therefore all collective deliberations were conducted in an objective manner. Different view-points could be expressed but as they were bound by a solemn pledge of being united in the presence of the Guru; the resolutions were carried unanimously. The choosing of a committee which was created to carry the Gurmatas of the Sarbat Khalsa into effect and even otherwise to look after the affairs of the community was also conducted on the principle of unanimity. The popularly elected committee was answerable for its work to the parent body which had the power to change it whenever it was deemed necessary. The principle of responsibility involved in this process was useful and necessary so far it kept the leadership on guard. However, when the Sardars met under emergent circumstances in view of a grave situation, taking of decisions might have been confined to a few who happened to attend. Generally anybody could attend the meeting of Sarbat Khalsa and express his/her opinion in respect of everything mooted and discussed at the meeting. The resolutions were not voted upon individually or passed by majority but were carried *nem con*....<sup>1</sup>

---

1. Fauja Singh, 'Political ideas of the Sikhs during the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries,' *Ideas in History* (ed. Bishambar Prasad), Delhi 1960, pp. 198-99.

### Internal Administration of Misls

The active among the Sikh community organised themselves into twelve Misls in 1748, each placed under an independent chief, who ran its internal administration. Every Sardar enjoyed full sovereignty unlike most of the non-Sikh chiefs who were not suzerains to themselves. He dealt with other Sardars, Sikh or non-Sikh, directly and unhampered. In times of emergency or common danger, Sardar willingly associated with other Sardars. In the late eighteenth century, Sardar had been observed associating himself with his counterparts in campaigns aimed at territorial occupation, as for instance, the invasion of the territory of Sial Chief was made jointly by Hari Singh Bhangi and Karam Singh Dulu and Sialkot was attacked by four Bhangi chiefs.

Every Sardar had a team of officers to run the administration of his territory and register political changes. The territory of Sardar was divided into parganahs which formed most important units of administration instead of being a secondary one as it was in the Mughal times. Some time the term Ta'alluqa was used in place of parganah. In a few contemporary documents, the terms parganah and ta'alluqa were used for one and the same area. Lahore, for instance, has been referred to as parganah and ta'alluqa Lahore in an order of Gujjar Singh. Pathankot, Batala, Qila Sobha Singh were similarly mentioned.<sup>1</sup> Quite a number of parganahs bore resemblance in names and boundaries to those mentioned in *Ain-i-Akbari* which testified that the Sardars did not necessarily disturb the territorial divisions of the Mughal period. There were, however examples of parganahs larger or smaller in size that those finding mention in *Ain-i-Akbari*. For instance, Talwan parganah in the territories of Fateh Singh Ahluwalia was smaller than the one that is referred in *Ain-i-Akbari*. The parganah of Shikarpur was larger in size than what it was during Akbar's time. According to Dr. Sachdeva, "There were ta'alluqas or parganahs with the same size as that of the Mughal parganahs and also ta'alluqas larger than the former Mughal parganahs when a single chief took over a parganah and added villages to it taken from another, or when parts of several parganahs were made into a single ta'alluqa.

Each parganah was administered by a Kardar appointed by Sardar who looked after the law and order in the area under

1. Goswamy and J.S. Grewal, *The Pandori Documents*, Documents XXXII and XXXIV.

his jurisdiction and also performed some judicial functions, even as his primary concern was with the collection of revenues. He was assisted by Qanungos, Chaudharis and Muqaddams, who prepared revenue assessment records. Every village was covered by a Patwari, though every village did not have a Patwari exclusively for itself. Patwari's job was to keep and prepare land record at village level. At the headquarter of a Sikh chief, the post of Diwan was copiously referred to. He was the person next to the Sardar in importance. He was appointed by the Sardar to whom he was responsible. He looked after finance, particularly land revenue. In some Sikh principalities there existed more than one Diwan.<sup>1</sup>

The Sikh Sardars did not have any Wazir as it was the case in the principalities of a non-Sikh chief. There were, of course, references to Kar Mukhtars or Naibs, but certainly those officials did not bear resemblance to Wazir of the Mughal times. No post of a Subedar or Nazim existed in any of the Sikh principalities. Jhanda Singh in 1772 appointed Diwan Singh as the Nazim of Multan but this arrangement was exceptional and also temporary as Diwan Singh remained in office only till the recovery of Multan by Timur Shah in 1780. Nor was any post of Sadr at the court of a Sardar, his functions being taken over by the Qazi. Outside the headquarter of the Sardar, Qazis continued to deliver justice as per Muslim law. Appeals against all decisions at lower levels could be lodged with the Sardar who was the highest judicial authority.

Every Sardar had his own seal to be affixed on orders issued by him. For example, Ranjit Singh as the head of Sukarchakia Misl issued the following order under his seal in 1765 :

"The protection (Hifazat) of Jassowal crops belonging to Baba Ram Das is the responsibility of all Sardars of the Khalsa. They must take care that they are not plundered. This is imperative for the happiness of Fakirs (holymen) and the demands of our religion."

Seal,  
Ranjit Singh, Hakumat Singh  
and other Sardars,  
Samvat 1852 (A.D. 1795)

1. Ram Singh Rao, *Jassa Singh Binod* (MS) ff. 159 a, 192 b, *Fateh Singh Partap Prabhakar*, 143, 152.



Sikh Sardar was keenly interested in increasing population, agriculture and trade. He offered all sorts of concessions to the immigrants from Delhi region and the Ganga Doab as well as from the Sikh Misl principalities. The cultivators in particular and traders, artisans and menials in general flourished under the Sikh chiefs. The veracity of this statement is vouchsafed by almost all the contemporary authorities such as Colonel Polier, James Ranell, George Thomas et al. Colonel Polier wrote in 1776 that the Sikh territories were 'extensive and fertile'. Ranell in his work *Memoirs of a Map of Hindustan* recorded, "they (Sikhs) have extended their territories on the south east, that is, into the province of Delhi very rapidly of late years; and, perhaps, the Zamindars of that country may have found it convenient to place themselves under the protection of the Seiks, in order to avoid the more oppressive government of their former masters which obviously led to their prosperity and felicity."<sup>1</sup>

Malcolm who travelled in the Sikh country in 1803, writes, "In no country, perhaps, is the Rayat or cultivator, treated with more intelligence." Trade and industry also made strides on the road to progress. Many urban centres of Mughal times were revived while quite a number of new urban centres grew up under the fostering care of Sardars. Gujjar Singh, Lehna Singh and Sobha Singh paid concerted attention to development of Lahore, which had suffered a lot because of the continuous invasions of Ahmad Shah Abdali. Karam Singh Nakai rebuilt Satghara which had been sacked around 1745 and abandoned by its inhabitants. Sialkot was refurbished and repopulated by Jiwan Singh, Mohan Singh, Sahib Singh and Natha Singh. Similarly Bhera and Batala were resettled by Dhanna Singh Kalawala and Jai Singh Kanhiya respectively. Gujrat situated on the imperial road had been a prey to the advancing and retiring armies of Ahmad Shah. Gujjar Singh occupied it in 1765 and spared no pains to induce people to settle down to pursue peaceful avocations. Rawalpindi was a small village but when from the time it was occupied by Milkha Singh Thepuria (1767) it started flourishing. According to *District Gazetteer of Rawalpindi*, "Milkha Singh invited traders from Bhera Miani, Pind Dadan Khan and Chakwal to settle in Rawalpindi. Soon it became a large town under his administration." Gujranwala under Charat Singh Sukarchakia, Fatehbad and Kapurthala under Fateh Singh

1. Ranell, *Memoirs of Map of Hindustan or the Mughal Empire*.



Ahluwalia, Rahon under Tara Singh Kang, Sujampur under Amar Singh Bagga, Sayyadwala under Karam Singh Nakai and Nurmahai under Charat Singh Nurmehlia. Amritsar also received fillip in terms of its development. The Golden Temple which was blown up by Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1762 was reconstructed by the Sikh chiefs. Besides the central township, the Sikh chiefs built about a dozen Katras around, encouraging traders and craftsmen to reside in them. These Katras provided all possible security to its inhabitants. Each Katra had its own administrator. Some of the chiefs, such as Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and Mahan Singh built forts as well. Hari Singh adopted the town of Amritsar as its capital. There were some other Urban centres which came out flourishing and progressing because of the interest taken by Sardars. Besides there was quite a number of fresh urban centres which sprang at the behest of Sardars.

Haqiqat Singh Kanhiya for instance, founded Fatehgarh and Narot Jaimal Singh. His brother Mahtab Singh founded Chittaurgarh.<sup>1</sup> Qila Sobha Singh and Qila Suba Singh were built respectively by Sobha Singh and Suba Singh. Nidha Singh Hattu built Daska.<sup>2</sup>

Almost all big cities were administered by a Kotwal whose duties were akin to his counterpart in the times of Great Mughals. Lest peace should be disturbed, Sikh Sardars established thanas (military posts) at vantage places. According to Dr. Sachdeva, "For the administration of the towns, services of Chaudharis and different Mohallas were also utilized by the Bhangi chiefs. These Chaudharis used to be the headmen of different professional classes. Their opinion was taken on all important matters connected with the town or its neighbourhood. Among the Chaudharis of Lahore were Mian Muhammad Ashiq, Mian Mohkam Din, Mir Shadi Khan and Mir Badr-ud-Din. There are references to Chaudharis in Gujrat under Gujjar Singh."<sup>3</sup>

In villages, the Sardars ruled through Panchayat. "The Panchayat," writes Dr. Hari Ram Gupta, "was the assembly or council for determining the village affairs and consisted of most respectable representatives of tried virtue." These panchayats maintained perfect peace and tranquility. The chief officers of a village were Lambardar, Chowkidar and Muqaddam who worked

1. Ahmad Shah, *Tarikh-i-Punjab* (Pbi. Tr.) p. 56.

2. Munshi Amin Chand, *A History of Sialkot District*, p. 158.

3. Veena Sachdeva, *Polity and Economy of the Punjab*, Manohar Publishers, Delhi, 1993.

in close co-operation with the panchayat. A fair sense of justice pervaded the decisions of the panchayat, Members of the panchayat always took care that the weak got justice. Dr. Hari Ram Gupta writes in this context, "The panchayat or the council of elders restrained the stronger against any aggression against the weaker. Fortesque also holds similar views. He says, "No instances occur of a proprietor being driven from 'he village by oppression or violence. On the contrary it is admirable that they render each other the most fluidly and essential aids when in distress they will supply cattle to till land themselves consulate money when a sharer had been really unfortunate and they will assist in the disposal of his produce in producing seeds, bullocks and implements, should they be satisfied with him." The Sikhs however settled their disputes or issues in Sangat.

### **Sardars and Misdars**

To begin with the designation 'Sardar' and 'Misldar' were roughly used to fix a person who led a Misl-band of the Sikh activists committed to serve as the vanguard of the Khalsa to combat firstly against the Mughals, then against the Afghans to ultimately establish Khalsa rule. As time advanced, such bands began to acquire territories. The Chiefs of these bands began to be preferably called Sardars and among whom these chiefs distributed the territories they began to be designated Misldars. The extent of the territory, a chief gave to Misldars, depended upon with how many retainers he participated in the expedition meant to conquer territory/territories. Misldars further distributed his part of the territory/territories among their supporters known as pattidars, to be called as such because he owned a patti—a block of the territory/territories of Misldars often comprising a few villages.

This fact is amply borne out by Bute Shah<sup>1</sup> and Giani Gian Singh in his work entitled *Shamsber Khalsa* Part II (Urdu) third edition, p. 122. Giani Gian Singh says, "the minor Sardars joined some bigger Sardars and launched upon territorial acquisitions. They jointly conquered territories. The minor Sardars were known as Misldars and they never lost sight of the interests of their subordinates, supporters and well-wishers."

With the lapse of time, as the extent of territories under

1. Bute Shah, op. cit., Dafter IV.

occupation expanded, Sardars naturally became powerful and then they were rarely called Misdars. Ultimately, the title Misdar fell into disuse and the chiefs of territory/territories were often called Sardars.

Regarding the mutual relationship between 'Sardar' and 'Misdar', the overall charge of the Misl was in the hands of the Sardar (chief). The Sardars had many Misdars to be his associates to serve under his instructions. According to Browne and Ahmad Shah Batalia, the number of such Misdars had grown to something ranging from 400 to 500 each having alignment with some chief (Sardar) especially when there was a danger facing the chief or the Khalsa Panth. Within the Misl the chief was likely to possess larger territories than any of the other members of the Misl including Misdars. This being so, the prominence which the chief enjoyed as a commander was consolidated through larger acquisitions. Naturally, Sardar would expect his Misdars to continue to acknowledge his superior status, and go not against the wishes of the Sardar. This became pronounced when with the passage of time, Misl acquired territories and became a sort of state. In view of the changed character of the Misl, defection from one Misl, to another was looked upon with askance by the chief of a Misl as for instance, Nand Singh, an associate of Jhanda Singh Bhangi had occupied Pathankot and when he transferred it to his son-in-law Tara Singh Kanhiya, Ganda Singh Bhangi tried to wrest it from Kanhiya Sardars.

Notwithstanding the strain imposed on the Misdars by Sardars, Misdars enjoyed sufficient autonomy. According to Ahmad Shah Batalia, their obligation was limited to their active cooperation with the chiefs/chief only in such situation as called for armed offence or defence. Misdars enjoyed complete sovereignty in regard to their forces, their designs to conquer territories and to join any Misl. They were free to carve out their own principality and act as independent rulers of the same. They, however, were expected to enlarge their territory/territories without disturbing the Misl to which they belonged or any other Misl, understandably out of regard for the political morality as the Sikhs had evolved and which remained pervasive upto the seventies of the eighteenth century, at least.

According to *Char Bagh-i-Punjab*, the political ambition (Bu-riyasti) is attributed to Sardar Charat Singh at the very outset of his active career when he was in the contingent of Bhangi. This

is equally applicable to every Sardar and Misdar. Nahar Singh Chamariwala, Bhag Singh Hallowalia, Dit Singh Gill and Jodh Singh Wazirabadia who were the Misdars of the Bhangis claimed independent sway (Har Yaq, Raja-i-Khud Dam-i-Hakumat he zad) and were free to pursue their objective.

Sardar's power vis-a-vis his followers were supreme but only in theory. "Sardar was an all powerful lord paramount, exerting an exclusive authority even to the power of life and death, even over his vassals, but in actuality there existed much less cause for oppression than in any of the neighbouring state. According to Steinbach, "The Sikh chief exercised absolute supremacy over it (his Misl) for his followers exacted a share in the land proportioned to the service each had rendered, merely looking upon the Sardar by the chief in war and arbiter in peace."<sup>1</sup>

In fact all that a Sikh chief demanded in those days from a follower was a horse and a match-lock. All that a follower sought was protection and permission to plunder in the name of God and the Guru under the banner of the chief. There was no question of pay. A follower if dissatisfied could leave the service of one chief and seek service with someone else. Misdars, in fact, vied with one another to attract maximum number of followers.

When more than one Misdar took part in any joint expedition, they distributed the booty among themselves on the basis of their number of the fighting men contributed by each. Subsequently, each chief further divided his share among his followers on the same basis. According to N.K. Sinha, "Each held his portion in absolute independence. There was no obligation except for common purposes. Slowly and steadily, however, the powers of the Sardars increased, their territories were extended, strong forts were built, their fighting strength increased and ultimately they emerged as twelve very powerful chiefs of Misls."

### **Relations between the Ruler and his Subjects**

The relations between the ruler and the ruled were cordial and intimate.<sup>1</sup> The secret of the popularity of a Sikh Sardar was his regard and concern for his people. "Although he (chief) is absolute, rules with such moderation and justice that he is believed

1. Steinbach, *The Sikhs*, p. 13.

2. 'A tour to Lahore in 1808' by an officer of Bengal army reprinted in *Punjab, Past and Present*, Vol. I, pp. 111-115.

and revered by his people whose happiness he studies to promote." Malcolm would have us believe "the chiefs despised luxury of diet and lived on simple food. They were plainly dressed divested of ornaments, and their general mode of living was simple." Dr. Hari Ram Gupta is all praise for the disposition and demeanour of Sikh Sardars. He records "Was it not a marvel to see the Sikh chiefs squatting on the ground in the midst of their subjects plainly dressed, unattended by any escort without any paraphernalia of government, talking, laughing and joking as if with comrades, using no diplomacy with them but having straightforward dealings, simple manners, upright mind and sincere language.<sup>1</sup> They were keenly interested in providing justice to the people. "All criminal cases, after preliminary enquiries by the Kotwal are submitted to him for punishment. The chief of every town looks to the needs of the needy traveller from his own funds, a part of which is set apart for this purpose."<sup>2</sup>

In order to advance their interests, the Chiefs at times, resorted to matrimonial alliances. Charat Singh married his daughter to Sahib Singh son of Sardar Gujjar Singh Bhangi. An alliance between the Kanhiyas and Sukarchakias provided the ladder for the rise of Ranjit Singh. An alliance could be effected by the ceremonial exchange of turbans at Sri Akal Takhat Sahib to be followed by a public vow of mutual assistance.

Such alliances were not essentially made to combat an enemy, they were formed to refine the atmosphere for mutual good will and cooperation.

### **The Khalsa Ideals and Misldars/Sardars**

It is a moral imperative for every Sikh to receive baptism of the double-edged sword. In the case of a ruler, it was strictly followed. None was elected as a Sardar/Misldar of a Misl or of Dal Khalsa unless he had taken 'Amrit'. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was administered Pahul by Nawab Kapur Singh. Raja Amar Singh prided on having received 'Amrit' from the hands of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. The founder of the Kanhiya Misl Amar Singh Sanghania (Kangra) considered it absolutely necessary for a person to be administered Pahul before he/she was admitted into his camp (Dera).

---

1. H.R. Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. III, Lahore, 1944, p. 131.

2. 'A tour to Lahore in 1808', op. cit., pp. 111-115.

Similarly Charat Singh recruited to his contingent only those persons who were duly initiated. According to Sohan Lal Suri, for those who were not initially initiated through baptism of the double-edged sword, arrangements were made for the same.<sup>1</sup>

The Sardars of the Misl were generally known by the honorifics of 'Singh Sahib', 'Bhai Sahib' or Khalsa Jeo. Bhai Fateh Singh, Bhai Amar Singh, Bhai Gulab Singh Khalsa Jeo, Jai Singh, Bhai Ranjit Singh Jeo, Singh Sahib Bhai Dal Singh Jeo are some of the examples vouchsafing our aforetold assertion.<sup>2</sup>

The Sikh chiefs ruled in the name of God and the Khalsa. This fact is borne out amply from their coins. They never ascribed their victories to themselves as individuals but to the Khalsa Jeo, the whole Panth. "The rule of the Misl, at least upto the sixties of the eighteenth century, was not absolutist or monarchical, it reflected democratic ideals, and concepts as inculcated by their Gurus. 'Gurmata' was a resolution of the Sarbat Khalsa taken democratically. The process of electing a leader of a Misl at least in the early stages, as also of Dal Khalsa was also a testament to the democratic urge and spirit of the Khalsa.

Guru Nanak had expressly told that "it is the duty of a king to administer justice. Only he should (be able to) occupy the throne who is capable of holding that (exalted) office and (is fit to discharge his obligations to the people). Only they are true Rajas who have recognised the truth."<sup>3</sup>

The Sikh rulers had fully realised that dominion can subsist in spite of mischief but cannot endure with the existence of injustice. According to Dr. Bhagat Singh, "However crude the methods of investigation and trial they might have adopted, the Sikh chiefs were known for their love of justice. Every Sikh ruler at the time of investiture solemnly promised in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib to always keep before him, in the performance of his duties the Sikh code of conduct, the law of the land and the custom of the society."

Under the influence of teachings of Sikh Gurus, in the matter of origin, growth and development of the Misl, the caste was accorded no place. No Misl was named after any caste or sub-caste of any chief or Misldar. Whether any of the leaders of the

1. Sohan Lal Suri, op. cit., II, p. 5.

2. Dalpat Rai (ed.) *Amir-ul-Imlu* or *Mantakhab-ul-Haqq* (MS), Dr. Ganda Singh's personal collections, Patiala.

3. Adi Granth Slok Mahala 1, Var Maru, Pauri 9.



Misls was a peasant, carpenter or an adopter of any other profession, it mattered little with the Sikhs. The leader should be a member of the Khalsa fraternity.

Shri Guru Granth Sahib had laid special emphasis on the selfless service to the whole humanity considering it the creation of God in which He permeates and through whom He manifests. Guru Nanak in his composition asserts, "Service in the world alone shall find for one a seat in the court of Lord." Guru Angad Dev enjoined upon his followers that "If one serves with selflessness, then he alone gets honours." The Guru personally set high example of *sewa* (service). Guru Angad served his Master and the Sikhs with utmost devotion. Guru Amar Das tended lepers and took pleasure in serving 'Guru ka Langar' to his Sikhs. Guru Ram Das's participation in the excavation of Baoli at Goindwal and Guru Arjan Dev's anxiety to cure the patients suffering from socially tabooed leprosy were the shining examples of unselfish service.

The lessons in *Sewa* had not been lost sight of by the Misldars/Sardars. They seemed to have become integral part of their psyche. The Sikh society of the eighteenth century had regards for all those, who did service to the people. This was one of the cardinal reasons that Kapur Singh was asked to accept Nawabship. Now it was again in this context that the Sikh chiefs always maintained their free kitchen to supply food to the wayfarers as well as to the poor and the needy even under great strain. It is on record that the Punjab faced a terrific famine in 1783. Sardar Budh Singh went out of the way to serve food to the victims of famine so much so that he sold all his property.<sup>1</sup>

The impulse of serving the people was poignantly manifest even in the governance of the Misldars/Sardars. The cornerstone of their administration was their chastened outlook, liberal-mindedness in their dealings with the Muslims and other non-Sikhs and their penchant for the security and prosperity of their subjects.

In this context, the remarks of the authors of *Gujrat District Gazetteer* are very pertinent. They say, "The names of Sardar Gujjar Singh and Sahib Singh are often in the mouths of the people, who look back to their rule without the smallest bitterness. They seem, indeed, to have followed an enlightened liberal policy sparing no effort to induce the people parried by twenty years of constant

1. *Montgomery Gazetteer*, 1883-84, p. 34.

spoliation, settle down once more to peaceful occupations.<sup>1</sup>

### **Religious Catholicity of the Sikh Chiefs**

The Sikhs in the first half of the eighteenth century had suffered a lot at the hands of the Mughal as well as Afghan rulers simply because they were Sikhs and cherished to live Khalsa ideology. The ruling elites in the both aforesaid cases were filled with religious fanaticism, carefully nourished and fanned by their leadership to bolster up their vested interests, may it be against the fundamental rights of man to express and progress fully.

Notwithstanding the wounds and hardships the Sikhs had to suffer without any fault of theirs, in the struggle for survival and then for territorial occupation, they did not allow themselves to be dehumanised and steadfastly clung to the Guru's injunctions to treat all the people as the children of God. They behaved towards Muslims or any other non-Sikh segment with consideration, compassion, non-hypocritically and non-discriminately.

Supportive of this fact are terrifically important words of Campbell who said, "They were not exclusive and unduly prejudiced in favour of their own people but employed capable Mohammadans and others almost as freely as Sikhs." Ali-ud-Din Mufti<sup>2</sup> also gives this impression when he says that Lehna Singh Bhangi gave turbans and bestowed honours on Qazis and Muftis on the occasion of Id. Jaimal Singh of Kanhiya Misl took special care of the Muslims. When Sayyad Ghulam Ghaus fled from Batala and sought asylum with Mahan Singh Sukarchakia, it was readily given and in addition he was encouraged to assume the responsibility of running the theological seminary. Qazi Nur Mohammad, a contemporary, writing about Ala Singh, recorded that Muslims were in the service of Ala Singh as were the Hindus. Muhammad Shah Khokhar of the parganah of Sanaur was an ardent admirer of Ala Singh. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, the indisputed leader of Dal Khalsa and Sardar of his Misl was famous for his non-sectarian approach. It was due to his liberal policy that the Afghans of Urmar Yahapur and Tanda (now in Hoshiarpur District) joined his forces. Gian Singh, the celebrated author of *Raj Khalsa'* records, "Hundreds of people took meals from the langar

1. *Gujrat District Gazetteer*, 1883-84, p. 34.

2. Ali-ud-Din Mufti, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 240.

run by Jassa Singh irrespective of community. Sectarianism had not touched his heart, even peripherally. Muslim soldiers formed a big chunk of his forces, and they were free to perform religious rituals as per their conscience. Fateh Singh Ahluwalia did not feel hesitation to appoint Qadar Bakhsh as his special emissary to be sent to the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

In matter of grants of land and of cash, the Sikh Sardars considered all religious dispensations alike with due respect. Where-as they made revenue free grants to Sikh Gurdwaras, Udasi and Nirmala establishments, Bedis and Sodhies, they endowed grants to the Muslim mosques, Khanqahs, Vaishnav and Shavate establishment, Hindu prohibits and Brahmins and temples. Among the most important establishments and personages who were recipients of the grants were Vaishnava Math at Pindori and Jogi Nath at Jambar, Pandit Harnam Das of Lahore, Jiwan Ram Basti Ram of Amritsar, while Harimandar Sahib, Shaheed Ganj of Lahore, Gurdwara Manjh Sahib Jandiala, Akal Bunga, Jhanda Bunga, Granthis, Ragis, Rababies and Dhadis attached with Harimandir Sahib were the most important recipients of revenue free grants of land. Almost all the previous grants of land of cash given by the Mughal rulers in Dharmarth were confirmed. There was not a single example of discontinuance of such grants by any Sikh chief.

Sikh chieftains were equally liberal towards foreigners. William Frankline's testimony on this point is unequivocal. He records, "The Sikhs allow foreigners of every description to join their standard to sit in their company."<sup>2</sup>

All this they did because of the primal impulse which Sikhism engendered and which affected the psyche of the Sikhs whether they were chieftains or individuals. The Guru had taught them that everyone irrespective of any affiliations is sacred because in everyone Divine resides and permeates. Since in Guru Granth Sahib, this theme has been repeatedly impressed upon; the Sikh chieftains could help accepting its effect. Similarly, the polity as evolved by the Gurus was anti-sectarianism and its visualised government as an instrument of God to ameliorate and beautify God's creation. The form of government was democratic republican wedded to establishing 'Helemi Raj' the rule that

1. Gian Singh, *Raj Khalsa* (2nd edition, Urdu), p. 202.

2. Frankline, *Memoirs of George Thomas*, Calcutta. 1803, p. 75.

guaranteed the people human rights in all its aspects at the same time unleashing forces or creating environment for human beings to recognise Divine in themselves to be esteemed citizens of Guru's Republic. Naturally this being the faith of the Khalsa, it was but natural that the Sikh chieftains followed liberal policy imparting no credence to any particularism or communalism. Indeed, it was the miracle of Khalsa ideology that the Sikh chieftain could not be influenced by Islamic imperialism of the Mughals and Afghans and Chauvinism of the Marathas, and set up models of polity which ensured well-being of the society which in its complexion was multinational and multi-religious. This model was brought into being almost three hundred years ago when the people all over the world were steeped deep in particularism of different brands, religious, national, racial, or casteist.

The government of these chieftains could not be termed communal because in spite of the presence of different communal groups namely Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, it remained specifically impartial and neutral and no communal group was accorded special treatment either in religious or ethnic or casteistic terms. All the non-religious formations looked upon the government with favour and sought help to meet their demands without any reservation. The government on its part came down quickly to reach out to them in time of their difficulties promptly and affectionately. In matters of grants to religious institutions and religious personnels, the Sardar was magnanimous and non-discriminatory. Such a political behaviour of the Mis| Sardars in their respective territories generated forces that went a long way to engender co-existence between various communal groups. Even when the Sardars were locked in mutual squabbles, they did not stoke communalism. By behaving as such, they identified the right road for Maharaja Ranjit Singh to trudge and establish the rule absolutely non-communal, non-sectarian aiming at the fusion of diverse groups into the people of the state. Unconsciously their policies helped the emergence of Punjabi nationalism. Khalsa ideology vicariously affected the Sikh psyche in such a way that it always aspired for transcending individualism and building a fresh society on the basis of the principle that Akal is the master of all and therefore all are to be developed harmoniously.

## ***Land Tenure Under the Misls***

### **General**

Sikh Sardars in their territories did not interfere with old and hereditary land tenures. The rights of the people in Punjab were regulated and protected by customary and moral laws. In case new fields or residential sites were brought into use, the cultivators or owners or these were also accorded the rights enjoyed by old or hereditary proprietors with the difference that they had no voice in the management of the village affairs, at least for some time. Upto the time they acquired the status of hereditary proprietors, their tenure was designated as a subordinate tenure.

The subordinate tenure was interfered with, sometime by the Sikh Kardars who in special cases would appoint a favourite of theirs in newly acquired lands. 'Still it is remarkable how numerous are the occupants who have held their land for even two and three generations and how readily their right to hereditary occupancy has been admitted by the propriety body in general.'

The Sikh Sardars attached to Malki or proprietorship the same ideas as these are prevalent presently. The Sikh Kardars seldom interfered with the cultivating community which paid as much tax to the state as the mere tenants-at-will. Jullundur District Gazetteer records, "As long as the community paid all their taxes, and kept up their estate in a high state of cultivation, Sikh Sardars never interfered and left them to their own internal government. Indeed, he would assist them in preserving their organisation, adjusting their shares and so on. I have known cases where questions of this kind have been taken up by Kardars and referred to arbitration."

### **Land Tenures**

Different land tenures in the Misl period could be classified into five categories.

#### **Jagirdari**

In the area under Misldars/Sardars three types of Jagirs are identified—Service, Inam and Subsistence. Service Jagir was primarily either military or civil. When a Jagir was required to serve with a certain number of horsemen, he was assigned Jagirs not only for his personal services but also for maintenance of his

horsemen." The civil Jagir was paid only for his personal services. This is illustrated with reference to a number of cases. Charat Singh Sukarchakia gave a Jagir worth 65000 rupees to Sahib Singh Kalianwali for maintaining 80 horsemen. Administrators like Diwan Sher Dayal under Charat Singh Sukarchakia, Diwan Guttu Mal under Gujjar Singh were also granted Jagirs. The Inam Jagir is defined as land held on the same basis as the service Jagir but not against any office or with any obligation to the state. Such Jagirs were generally given by the Sikh rulers by way of rewards. The recipients of these grants were largely Chaudharis and Muqaddams. Chaudhari Naqali, Chaudhari Sultan Khan, Chaudhari Chet Ram were granted such Jagirs by Jai Singh Kanhiya, Gurbakhsh Singh Kanhiya and Amar Singh Bagga respectively.

Subsistence Jagirs were given without involving the idea of either rewards or service. Gujjar Singh of Gujrat, for instance, gave such a Jagir to his father-in-law. The subsistence and Inam Jagirs were hereditary.

The service Jagirdars did not possess any hereditary rights over Jagirs. But the rulers normally gave service Jagirs to their descendants. That was why several families of Jagirdars continued to serve the rulers for more than one generation. On the death of Gaura Singh, a Jagirdar of Sahib Singh of Gujrat, his son Nihal Singh was taken into service. Dasaundha Singh Randhawa and his descendants served Hari Singh of Amritsar and his successors for three generations. After the death of Dayal Singh Chhachhi, Mahan Singh Sukarchakia confirmed his son Jassa Singh in his Jagir.

With the Jagirdars being hereditary and permanent there started the erosion of the usefulness of Jagirdari system. Jagirdars became lax, lethargic and inactive with no desire to look beyond their Jagirs and that too to fleece their subjects right and left to cater to their luxuries. In the face of such facts, Jagirs tended to be hereditary, leading to the erosion of the usefulness of Jagirdari system with the passage of time. Jagirdars sure of their security indulged in luxurious living ceasing to harbour any constructive ambition.

The Sardars were very particular that no Jagirdar treated the cultivators disrespectfully and harshly. According to Dr. Hari Ram Gupta, "The Sardar dealt with every village directly and checked that the landlords did not become absolute. In case of delinquency or wilful withholding of revenue Sardar would oust such refractory people and appoint new men in their places. This happened



generally in the territories in the north-east of the Punjab. Such actions naturally brought about changes in the form of village tenure and in the proprietary classes.

"The Sikh Sardars granted holdings of land to pious persons and pious places such as gurdwaras, temples, mosques, schools, tanks and bridges and religious establishments. Such grants were revenue free and were generally called Dharamarth. The land given in Dharamarth was generally given in terms of ghumaon, bighas, kanals and marlas. There are references also to the fourth or third of a village and to half or the whole village in many of these grants. As during the Mughal times, concessions other than grant of land revenue were also given during the eighteenth century. For instance, Sada Kaur exempted a Brahmin grantee from the payment of water tax (Nahrana) on the revenue free land granted to him in several villages. The grantees were also exempted from forced labour (Kar or Begar) or any payment in lieu thereof."

In delivering Dharamarth grants, the Sikh chiefs were impartial and non-discriminatory. All religious dispensations benefitted. Bedis, the descendants of Guru Nanak; Sodhies, descendants of Guru Ram Das; Bhallas, the descendants of Guru Amar Das and Trehans, the descendants of Guru Angad Sahib enjoyed revenue free grants. Likewise, the Sayyads, the descendants of the Prophets and Brahmins, the Hindu priestly class were also endowed revenue free grants. Among the Hindu religious establishments the Udasi centres known as Akharas, Deras, Darbars, Samadhis and Dharamsalas, the Vaishnav and jogi establishments at Pindori and Jakhbar respectively were awarded revenue free holdings of land. Muslim mosques, Khanqahs and various religious establishments including Madrasas also enjoyed the revenue free land delivered by Sikh Sardars. Harimandir Sahib, Shaheed Ganj of Lahore, Gurdwara Manji Sahib at Jandiala, Akal Bunga, Jhanda Bunga, Granthis, Ragis, Rababis and Dhadis attached with Harimandir Sahib also held holdings of revenue free grants for their maintenance and upkeep.

Almost all the previous grants of land or of cash given by the Mughal rulers were confirmed. There was not a single example of discontinuance of such grants by any Sikh chief.

The grants were made by Sardars through formal orders bearing their seals. These orders were generally addressed to the Amils or the Kardars, the Chaudharis and the village Zamindars.

To cite one example, in an order of Gulab Singh of Amritsar, there is a seal and the order is addressed to the Kardars of Ta'alluqa Nur-ud-Din in Amritsar. It is stated in the order that Khalsaji (Gulab Singh) has given by way of bhet, land attached to the well called Gulabwala in 'Mauza Tharu' to Bhup Chand Bedi with effect from the Kharif crop of Sammat 1852 (A.D. 1765). All concerned are instructed not to interfere with this arrangement. A scrutiny of Dharamarth grants indisputably testify that these were not only confined to Sikh individuals and institutions, rather all dispensations were beneficiaries. This was primarily because of their psyche shaped by Sikh religion. But this is not to deny that their self-interest too demanded such a policy. Through charitable grants, they tended to increase their power and influence as if in a spirit of competition. To enlist the support of influential individuals by giving them grants was to enlist the support of their followers at the same time.

### **Pattidari**

The second type of land tenure that existed during the Misl period was pattidari. Patti means division of a village into ancestral shares. To illustrate this point, let us suppose Mr. X had two sons by one wife and three sons by another wife. According to the law of inheritance of Chundband, one half of the village would go to first two sons and the other half to the other three sons. The first two sons would work in common in one part of the village and three would hold the second part of the village. Each part of the village would again be sub-divided in accordance with the common law. The further division would be called Patti. Thus the pattidari implied division of an estate according to ancestral fractional shares under the law of inheritance, "In the beginning they owed the village jointly but later on it was possessed severally. It became a pattidari village. The whole village was divided into tarfs. A tariff was divided into Pattis. A patti was divided into thulas, tolas or thoks, a thula into barries and a beri into Khatas of individual holdings. Each share was determined by ancestral right and could be modified occasionally. Sometimes it so happened that one descendant of the same ancestor became a Sikh, the other became a Muslim, while the third remained a Hindu. In such a case, one side of the village belonged to the Hindus, the other to the Sikhs and the third to Muslims. But their shares were governed according to the common law of their religion.

The pattidari tenure could not be sold but it could be mortgaged. The rules of Haqshufa applied to it. No out-sider could purchase it. If he did, the nearest relative appealed to a court of law and the bargain was at once annulled. If the whole village and its lands were wholly divided, it was pattidari. In many cases some of the land was retained jointly; then it was imperfect pattidari. Each proprietor or co-sharer held certain lands directly in his own possession. The rest was owned jointly or in common. The common land met the revenue charges of all or it was reserved for the purpose of grazing and wood cutting for fuel or repair of agricultural implements or for breaking it up for cultivation or habitation.

According to Dr. H.R. Gupta, the country was first divided into major groups of 84 villages, 42 villages or 24 villages called respectively chaurasi, bealisi or chaubisi. In course of time the division came into single village. The ancestral share were expressed in terms of a rupee, bigha, such as four anna share, one anna share or two paisa share and in kanal, marla or biswa shares.

### **Misldari**

According to this tenure, Sardar or head of a Misl granted shares in the booty as well as in the land among his associates, later to be called Misldars. Shares in the land could also be granted to outsiders as a reward for some meritorious service. Misldars or the grantees could transfer their lands within the Misl and not to another Misl.

### **Tabedari**

Hereditary but non-proprietary, residents on land in the village held tabedari tenures. The cultivators belonging to this category were not the owners of the land but they could not be ousted under the law of the land. Similarly, non-cultivators could not be ejected from the residential plots, although they had no proprietary rights. The aforesaid cultivator and resident could not sell their holdings. They, however, had the right to mortgage them.

### **Hathkardari**

In certain parts of the Misl territories, a peculiar type of tenure called Hathkardari came into existence. The Zamindars made over the proprietary share of the produce along with responsibility for revenue to some influential man whom the Sikhs treated with

consideration. The contractor who was thus engaged to pay revenue to the government on consideration of the proprietary share minus the proprietor's fee was called Hathkarnewala and the man who made over the produce and withdrew from the responsibility for the government revenue, known as Hath-rakhnewala.

### **Revenue Assessment**

In the areas of the Misl, the methods adopted to determine the land revenue were simple and unscientific, although every care was taken to protect the interests of a cultivator. In the early 18th century the system of Zabt was the most important followed by Batai and Kankaut; but in the later half of eighteenth century, Batai and Kankaut were more widely used as compared with Batai. According to Batai system crops after harvesting were brought to the threshing floor and divided; state having its own share and the cultivator having the rest. At certain places, where it was different to reach or not much was expected by the state, Bigha system was prevalent according to which land revenue was determined on the basis of the number of Bighas of land one possessed. In the case of Kankaut system the yield of grain was calculated by the Kardar with the assistance of appraisers. They roughly measured the field or guessed the area by the eye. They visited each field of each owner examined the standing crops and assessed it equal to so many bighas. The number of bighas and the quantity of grain per bigha was entered against each man. A deduction of one-tenth was made for the village servants, and the residue was divided between the Zamindar and the government in the fixed proportion.

After the price of the produce for the harvest was fixed and the total value computed, the village money-lender was called upon to advance the whole or a large part of the amount to the Kardar who always aided him while he collected the produce. The collection of revenue in the case of Kankaut was generally made in cash and even in the case of Batai, the share of government could be sold on the spot.

In certain areas Zabti was prevalent as for instance in a part of Kapurthala. The average income of the past few years served as the basis of assessment. Only certain crops such as sugarcane, cotton, tobacco and perishable crops were subjected to this system.

Before the division of the crop between the state and the cultivator, deductions were made for the expenses of cultivator and on account of Pachotra or five percent share of the Chaudhari or the Muqqadam. Weighman's fees and carriage were charged from the cultivator, besides some other cesses. The share of the government in the case of indigo was assessed in cash per maund. This share was called Moghla and was prevalent under the Bahawalpur chiefs. It was generally fixed at five rupees per maund. The general rate, on the whole at which a Sikh chief realised his share of produce, was one-third of grain and one-fourth of straw.<sup>1</sup>

On crops of daily consumption such as fodder for cattle or vegetables or fruit, the normal charge was one rupee for one kacha bigha or a fixed quantity of the produce on cash crops such as cotton, sugarcane, poppy and indigo, the state preferred to realise its share in cash. The state share was from 1/3rd to one half of the total produce.

A special practice known as Inam was introduced by the Sikhs. In a newly acquired territory a Sikh chief did not find himself strong enough to subdue the cultivators, he would come to terms with the influence of locality granting them half of the state revenue of certain villages or parts of the village or exempting a plough or two of the cultivator from assessment. Such men were called Chaudharis or Inamdars. They always assisted the Sardars in ascertaining the resources of the village, in collecting the revenue and in maintaining the order. These grants lasted as long as the grantee remained alive.

The revenue system adopted by the Sikhs had been wonderfully successful in promoting the extension of cultivation in a tract which prior to the period of Sikh rule was particularly an Un-cultivated waste inhabited only by pastoral and nomadic tribes.<sup>2</sup> Polier amply testifies to this observation. He writes, "The Sikhs' own immediate possessions are exceedingly well cultivated, populous and rich. The revenues, in general taken in kind throughout and not in money, which is very favourable to the tiller. In short, few countries can vie with theirs, particularly in this part of India." Six or seven years later, George Forster referred to the large revenues of the extensive and fertile territories of the Sikhs, Without precise information on the revenues of the Sikh times, Forster thought that there was 'no great decrease in the revenues

1. *Ludhiana District Gazetteer*, 1888-89, p. 178.

2. *Ibid*, 1893-94, p. 71.

collected during the reign of Aurangzeb." James Browne referred to a 'state of high cultivation in the Sikh territories and added that the rent was moderate and cultivator was never molested. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, William Franclin stated that grain in the Punjab was cheaper than in any other part of India. He also referred to the abundance of sugarcane, wheat, barley, rice, pulses of all sorts, tobacco and various fruits produced in the Punjab which was also well supplied with cattle.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Rakhi and Kambli**

Rakhi as a system emerged just after the death of Muin-ul-Mulk. When Punjab plunged into anarchy and disorders, confusion and chaos reigned supreme. In three years from 1753 to 1756, nine changes took place in the office of the governor. The administration broke down completely. People had become an easy prey to anyone who chose to oppress them. The common man lived in constant dread of invading hordes of the Afghan robber-soldiers, the professional robbers, the Sikh *Dharvees* and worse-than robber type of revenue collectors. Revenue administration there was none. The cultivator followed the plough with a sword in his hand, the collectors came at the head of a regiment, and if he fared well, another soon followed him to pick up the crumbs. The roads were unsafe and trade and industry were in doledrums. The plight of the people was indeed sordid.

The Sikh Misdars/Sardars, now decided to make the most of the opportunity. They very rightly observed that at this juncture people wanted a Rakha, someone who would protect them from unscrupulous revenue collectors, rapacious government officials, and foreign attacks. They also reckoned that their struggle for the liberation of the Punjab and for the establishment of Khalsa Raj warranted that regular income should be ensured and its mass base be broadened by fraternising with people. They therefore offered a plan to individual village for their security and safety. A village as a whole was to place itself under the protection of the Dal Khalsa owing obedience to a particular chief. The village headman would collect from all the inhabitants, Rakhi money which amounted to one fifth of the government revenue twice a year in May and October-November at the end of each harvest called

---

1. George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, I, pp. 336-37.  
Ganda Singh (ed.) *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, 17, 93, 101-02, 336-37.



Rabi and Kharif, spring and autumn crops. The amount was to be paid to the Sikh Sardar on demand. The Sardar in return would extend protection to it against plunder, theft or molestation of any other kind either from among themselves or from their neighbours, and government troops. This arrangement between the village or a cluster of villages and Sardar acquired in due course of time, the nomenclature of Rakhi system.

To start with, individual villages situated here and there entered into the aforesaid arrangement but after some time cluster of villages or even the whole tract accepted the protection of the Sikhs. In the beginning generally two Misls combined in view of the great dangers they had to encounter in one region while extending protection. A reserve force was stationed at Amritsar to help them in an emergency. Other Misls could also be invited to join them in case the danger grew acute. In the initial phase protection (Rakhi) to a certain area people did not imply territorial occupation, but later on, it meant as such. At times, a Sardar held two villages or areas one under protection and the other under his occupation. The stage of the occupation of the areas came in the sixties of the eighteenth century, particularly after 1761 while the process of extending protection to a certain area without occupying it had started earlier around A.D. 1753, after the death of Muin-ul-Mulk. In the Punjab the Rakhi in the sixties and afterwards implied that the territory under Rakhi was under occupation.<sup>1</sup> In the Gang Doab the awarding of Rakhi (protection) to a certain place/village/area did not imply its occupation as well by the Sardar/Misldar; it only indicated that a particular territory or area would be protected against their incursions and those of their Sikh brethren.

Polier writing in seventies of the eighteenth century equates Rakhi in Gang Doab with tribute as it was made prevalent in Gang Doab suggesting thereby that the territory covered under Rakhi did not form the territory of a particular Sardar or Sardars and it was the amount paid by the people of the territory for seeking protection against the incursions conducted by him/them or by some other Sikh chieftain.

1. Writing in 1770s, Polier observed "that the Sikh chiefs used to collect a certain yearly tribute from some areas of Delhi and Agra provinces which were not in their possession. The chief takes the district under their protection and is ready to fight against any of the brethren who might think of disturbing it."

James Brown endorsed what Polier perceived in regard to Rakhi. He records "in the districts not reduced to their absolute subjection, but into which they make occasional incursions, they levy a tribute which they called Rackey, and which is about one fifth of the annual rent; whenever a Zamindar has agreed to pay this tribute to any Sikh chief that chief not only himself refrains from plundering him, but will protect him from all others and this protection is by general consent held so far sacred that even if grand army passes through a Zamindari where the safeguards of the lowest Sikh chief are stationed, it will not violate them."

There were Gujjars, Mewatis and Marathas who frequently invaded this region and marauded the people, Hindus and Muslims alike. The Sikhs offered no help to the masses against such people as they could ill-afford because of the non-availability of their forces in the region all the time. According to Dr. Hari Ram Gupta, "they visited this region (Gang Doab) only twice a year for a short period, their raids occurred only when the people defied them, or when the Sikhs craved for a adventure due to their overflowing energy and enthusiasm or even greed. This explains why the Sikh Sardars charged one-eighth of the government dues as 'Rakhi' from the people in 'Gang Doab and one-fifth from the people of Punjab. From 1764 to 1803, the Sikhs established Rakhi particularly in the districts of Muzaffarnagar and Meerut.

Frankline and Princep considered Rakhi a blackmail because the people had to pay it to buy peace and protection against their raids and inroads. The observation was valid only in the cases of Rakhi in Gang Doab.

Dr. Hari Ram Gupta avers that there were Kambli charges also. These were charged from artisans of a locality. The minimum amount charged from a single family was equal to the price of a Kambli or a blanket, from two to three rupees. In return the artisans were given protection against the Sikh raids by the Sardar whom the payment was made.

The Rakhi was charged in the form of cash or kind as it suited the convenience of the people. It varied from one eighth to one half of the profit or one fifth of the rental value of the land fixed by authorities depending upon the paying capacity of the people.

Some scholars have taken fancy to compare Rakhi of the Misl

organisation with the Chauth of the Marathas. Both the systems bear resemblance to some extent beyond which they differ from each other. Both Rakhi and Chauth were levied from the area or villages which sought the protection of the Sardars in the case of Rakhi and of the Marathas in case of Chauth. The motive of both these levies was the extension of political influence. But here the resemblance ends.

The Marathas' interest in levying Chauth was the extension of their imperial interests and in this process they cared very little for the welfare of the people of the territory wherefrom Chauth was realised. Chauth thus was expressive of Marathas desire of expansion without shouldering any responsibility of tendering the area covered by Chauth.

The Sikhs' realising of Rakhi from the areas in Gang Doab was also prompted by their desire to expand and to raise money and this being so, Rakhi came very close to Chauth in its function. But in the Punjab the area under Rakhi was fully taken care of by the Misdars who exerted to promote the welfare of the people.

The Sikh Sardars regarded the area under their protection as part of their territory to be taken care of directly whereas the area under Chauth was to be ruled indirectly by the Marathas and was to be treated as a foreign land. In this context, Chauth has been rightly termed as 'blackmail'; at best it should be considered as a tax to be paid to the Marathas to spare them from their own plundering raids. There are examples on record which show that the Marathas protected the territory under Chauth from being plundered by other powers; but even in such cases the dominant motive in protecting it was to keep it safe to enable them to realise the Chauth without any hindrance. The Rakhi on the other hand guaranteed safety of the person and property of the area wherefrom it was collected. The cultivator could ply his plough and sickle and the trader conduct his business in an atmosphere of fearlessness. The roads passing through the area were rendered safe and secure for purpose of transportation and movement of the people.

The Rakhi system like Gurmata, Sarbat Khalsa and Dal Khalsa played a very important role during the 1750s and 1760s. It served as an important instrument of establishing political control over a large part of the Punjab. It supplied the Sikh Sardars with the idea of raising themselves into territorial chieftains. It ensured

regular income to the Sikhs in their struggle to liberate Punjab from the foreign shackles. Since the people were reassured by the 'Rakhi' that they were safe against the unjust demands of revenue farmers and inroads of the rapacious marauders, they began to look upon the Sikh struggle with favour with the result that the struggle's mass base was broadened.

### **Judicial Administration under the Misls**

The Sikhs, during the Misl period, did not have a fully developed and upto-date judicial system. According to N.K. Sinha, "The judicial system of the Sikhs was crude." The Misldars had no definite code of law to follow; they usually decided the cases as per customs and general maxims of justice as embodied in their sacred books. For want of any fixed legal system, the judges had got unlimited powers and sometimes even acted arbitrarily.

Most of the Sikh Sardars regarded justice not only a sacred duty but also as a source of income. This was the reason they would try to raise money at every stage of the case. For example, when a plaintiff, particularly in a case of theft, wanted to file a suit, he was to pay the Magistrate or Thanedar a sum of money equal to one-fourth of the value of the article. On the recovery of the stolen property, he was again to pay a sum of money known as *Nazrana*. In case, a man was found guilty, he was to pay heavy fine (*Jurmana*). If one was acquitted he was to pay *Shukrana* or gratitude money. If the trial was prolonged, both the applicant and the accused were required to deposit a certain amount of money with the Misl chief which was called *Tebkhana*.

Capital punishment was awarded very rarely. For most of the crimes, penalties were imposed. Those who were the proclaimed offenders, their noses, hands and feet were amputated.

The 'Gana' like *lex talionis* of the Romans or self-redress was a common feature of the judicial system of the Misldars. If any highway robbery or dacoity took place, the chief of that particular place was supposed to make good the loss. If the chief did not do so, the other chief had the liberty to attack his territory and make good the loss. Similarly in case of murders, the murderers were handed over to the relations of the deceased to be lynched.<sup>1</sup>

1. K.S. Narang, *History of the Punjab*, p. 264.

In cases of stolen cattle, Suragh, Khoj or trace of foot-steps was conducted. If it carried to the gate or into the fields of any village, the Zamindars of that village must either show the track beyond their own boundary and allow the village to be searched or pay the price of the cattle.<sup>1</sup>

### **Resolving Boundary Disputes**

In case of disputes on issues of boundary, the following methods were adopted to resolve the disputes :

- i) The Panchayat selected the oldest and the most respected members of their committee to define the limit.
- ii) The Panchayat referred the final adjustment to an old inhabitant of a neighbouring village upon whose local knowledge and experience they placed more reliance than on their own limited information.<sup>2</sup>
- iii) The parties to the dispute were presented and justice was given in favour of that person who commanded more respect in the vicinity.
- iv) Arbitration was resorted to. Generally the eldest and the most respected member of the Panchayats arbitrated.
- v) In case there was casualty arising out of the boundary dispute, the party at fault was to marry his daughter to some man in the family of the deceased or had to pay a heavy amount as penalty. Usually the injured party was always on the look-out for a chance to take revenge against the others, the blood money being considered an inadequate recompense and a revenge was sought.

Island in the centre of a river where water was deep enough for boats to ply, became the joint property of the chiefs on both banks. In case of diluvion the chief whose land was carried away did not lose his right. Claims to islands in a river flowing between two manors and two alluvions were determined by what was called the Muchmuch or Kishtee Banna which rule assigned the land to the proprietor of the bank or Imani upon which alluvion was thrown and from which water had receded.<sup>3</sup>

1. G.C. Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*, pp. 172, 175.

2. Ibid.

3. G.C. Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*, p. 174.

### **Breach of Promise cases**

Breach of promise cases were referred to by the chief to the Panchayats. The verdict used to be one of the following :

- i) Plaintiff was awarded another female from the girl's family.
- ii) If no other girls, the defendant must find a substitute.
- iii) Compensation of the damage actually incurred and some more money to be paid to the plaintiff.<sup>1</sup>
- iv) If a woman absconded into other territory, there was no help except reprisals or a request by a Panchayat to restore the woman. Revenue defaulters and debtors were never given back except at the special request of the Panchayat which gave assurance of man's property.

### **Panchayat and Sangats**

As the Misl administration was generally the village administration the most common court of justice was Panchayat. Almost all the disputes of civil nature were decided by the village Panchayat. Criminal cases of minor nature were also decided by the village Panchayat. The members of the Panchayat used to be the men of integrity, honesty and probity and this was the reason that Panchayats were held in high esteem. Malcolm writes, "As they (Panchayats) are always chosen from men of the best reputation in place they meet, thus this court has a high character of justice." Dr. Hari Ram Gupta endorses his views. He says, "That the Panchayat maintained perfect justice and equity in the village and generally strove to bring reconciliation between the parties involved in the dispute. They, however, enjoyed limited jurisdiction and could not give any serious punishment. But the general reputation of the Panchayat was good. The decisions of the Panchayat were generally carried out. "If somebody defied the decision of the Panchayat, he was expelled out of the caste. All other men of that caste would refuse all terms with him because they themselves were afraid of the same punishment. Even the Government officials did not help him in this matter and serving the classes refused to serve him." The Sikhs settled their disputes in Sangat.

1. Ibid.



## Sardar's Court

Above the Pañchayat was the Sardar's court which could try all types of cases—civil and criminal—and gave any type of punishment such as imprisonment, fine, mutilation of limbs or even give the right of self-redress or 'Gaha' to the wronged party.

According to one report, the Sikh chiefs or the officers dealing with serious cases mixed with people and tried to get the true facts about the case and though they were vested with uncontrolled power, their administration of justice was mild and equitable. No one disputed their decisions which were arrived at with patient care, and delivered with dignity and impartiality. Their simple manners and affectionate personality had a charming effect even on the biggest rogue.<sup>1</sup>

## Adalitis

In towns, courts were held by Adalitis who were often Muslim Qazis and Hindu Kayastha or Brahmmins rather than the Sikhs. Under a high Sikh chief, eminent Jagirdars were also entrusted with the civil and criminal powers.<sup>2</sup>

In certain states as for instance in Kaithal and Patiala bribes were frequently resorted to. It is said that Adalitis at Kaithal and Patiala passed as many years in imprisonment as on the bench.

According to Campbell, "When people thought that their particular grievances had not been sufficiently redressed, they sometimes appeared in the middle of the day with flaming torches to indicate that there was darkness and loudly called for redress. Another fashion of the aggrieved parties was to appear in court with straws in their mouths to indicate that they were reduced to the condition of mere cattle."

Cases relating to the Sikh religion or the cases in which the Misdar was involved were often presented to the Akalis at Harimandir Sahib at Amritsar. They called a general assembly of the leading Sardars and passed a Gurmata declaring the nature of the punishment to be imposed upon him. It was obligatory for every Sikh to follow Gurmata.

1. 'A Tour to Lahore in 1808' reprinted in the *Punjab, Past and Present*, Vol. I, Punjabi University, Patiala, p. 111.

2. Gupta, H.R., op. cit., Vol. III, p. 96.

## Sources of Income

The main source of income was land revenue which was one-fifth of the total produce in the canal irrigated land and one-fourth of the land revenue in the land irrigated by rain. Next important source was the tax which was levied on the merchandise by each chief as it passed through his dominions. The shawl trade, the horse and the arm trade yielded a good deal of income to the Sikh confederacies.

Another source of income was the amount which the Sardars extracted from the petty chiefs by way of tribute. Plunder of the foreign invaders also formed a big chunk of the total income of the state. Those foreign merchants who settled in the Punjab were accorded protection but foreign traders in their way to other countries were often plundered. War booty formed still another source of income. In addition to the aforesaid sources of income was the Rakhi, a tax levied on the area which sought guarantee of their protection from external foes and internal troubles. This tax amounted to one-fifth of the total revenue of the area under Rakhi. Administration of justice also rendered a good deal of income. Shukrana, Jurmana—fines and Tehkhana were other sources of income.

## Military Administration of the Misl

Military administration of the Misl can be favourably compared with that of the Mughal and of the contemporary Marathas. In some aspects, it was better and was an improvement over the contemporary military systems.

The armed strength of the Sikhs varied according to different estimates. According to Timur Shah, the son of Ahmad Shah Abdali, the Sikhs could field as many as 50,000 Sowars, well-equipped and well-dressed besides a large number of the infantry soldiers. Franklin puts the number as high as 2,48,900 in 1793-94. George Thomas thought that the Sikhs could field about 60,000 horse and 5,000 foot. According to Browne, the Misl-dars had 73,000 horse and 25,000 foot. Forster's estimate fixed the strength of the army as two lakhs.

Though the estimates vary, yet it is safe to presume that the Sikh army in the Misl period was about one lakh in which the infantry was only 5000 to 6000 and rest of them were horse-men. In the last years of the 18th century, the strength of the soldiers

had considerably increased.

It is also difficult to ascertain the exact strength of the individual Misl because of the paucity of records of the period under review. However, some of the Misls such as Bhangi Misl were strong enough to field 20,000 soldiers whereas in small Misls like Nakai and Shaheedi there were 3000 to 5000 soldiers.

In the Sikh army, there were the horse-men, the infantry and the artillery.

### **Cavalry**

The Misdars' army consisted largely of cavalry. The Punjab provided an excellent breed of horses, and the Sikh horse-men were very well-mounted horse-men, adept in the use of matchlocks and sabres. They were sturdy, agile, quick, dashing and frugal. According to George Thomas, "With the enemy they engage in continuous skirmish. They advance and retreat until men and horse become tired. They then retreat to some distance where they leave their horses to graze, take a very frugal meal and begin skirmishing once again. They have no tents, their cakes of flour serve as dishes and plates, each horseman had two blankets, one for himself and another for his horse, kept beneath the saddle. These with a grain bag and heel rope comprise the baggage of a Sikh. The rapidity of their marching is incredible. The love of a Sikh soldier for his horse was proverbial. According to Forster, "Though they make merry on the demise of any of their brethren, they mourn for the death of a horse, thus showing their love of an animal so necessary to them in their professional capacity. The Sikh horses were of the best breed in India, 'owing to the use formerly made thereby of Arabian and Persian stallions and something in the temperature of the air and water of the country. According to Dr. H.R. Gupta, the horses of Fateh Jhang, Dhanni Plain, Pindi Gheb and Rawalpindi Nakka country Lakhi jungle, and Multan were much sought for.

### **Infantry**

Infantry, among the Sikhs, was not an important branch of service. It was only in the time of Ranjit Singh that its importance was realised and the infantry troops were raised. In the time of Misls, the infantry troops were not held in high esteem. According to Griffin, "In time of war, they were left behind to garrison forts or to look after women." In fact before the military reforms of Ranjit

Singh were effected, this wing of the army did not gain importance.

### **Artillery**

The Misl army's artillery wing was very weak. In 1762, the Sikh army received 12 cannons when they defeated the army of the Khwaja Obed of Lahore at Gujranwala. Prior to that the Sikhs did not have any cannon which they could use in war. In A.D. 1800, there were 40 cannons with the Sikh army. As a matter of fact, one of the greatest difficulties the Sikhs faced while engaged against the Mughals and the Afghans was the non-availability of the guns without which it was difficult to withstand the fire of the heavy artillery of their opponents.

### **Recruitment**

Recruitment in the Sikh forces was entirely voluntary. No record of names, service or payment was kept and the soldiers voluntarily came forward to be enlisted.

### **Training and Discipline**

Nor was there any arrangement for training and drill. There was no fixing of the ranks in the Misl military organisation or gradation of officers and army personnel.

Yet there was discipline which was imparted by their everflaming zeal for their religion.

The contingents of various chiefs, whether their number was small or big joined the units of Dal Khalsa in the event of a national danger. Disobedience to the superiors was punished by war council of five though such cases were few. Forster vouchsafes that "though orders were issued in a Sicque (Sikh) army and a species of obedience observed, punishments are rarely inflicted."<sup>1</sup>

### **Salary**

The Sikh soldiers did not receive regular monthly salaries. The most common mode of payment was in kind at the time of harvest. Sometimes, the soldiers also received a share of the booty. Sometimes, the payment was made in the form of kind or allotment of land.

---

1. George Forster, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 329.

## **Weaponry**

The Sikh weapons of war consisted of swords, lances, double-edged daggers, bows and arrows, guns, culasses, muskets, sabre and spears, shields and coats of mail were used as weapons of defence. The Sikh soldiers were very efficient in handling the aforesaid weapons. So far as the handling of guns was concerned, J.D. Cunningham writes, "The Sikhs speedily became famous for the effective use of the match-locks when mounted and the skill is said to have descended to them from their ancestors in whose hands the bow was a deadly weapon."

## **Uniform**

There was no fixed uniform for the Sikh army in the modern sense of the term. Generally, the uniform of an ordinary soldier used to be a turban, a loose shirt, a Nicker-bocker and tight shoes. The chiefs, however, wore chain armour together with a steel helmet, breast plates, back plates, wrist guards and greaves. The Akalis were always dressed in the blue garments, and were heavily armed. In addition they carried several sharp-edged quoits round their turbans.

## **Flag**

The flag of the Sikh army during the Misl period was of saffron colour although we have not been able to know what heraldic sign it had on it. Their war-cry was "Sat Sri Akal" and "Waheguru ji ka Khalsa Sri Waheguru ji ki Fateh".

## **Mode of Warfare**

Regarding the mode of warfare, the Sikhs had evolved one most suited to their conditions. Since they did not have any territory or resources of their own to fall back upon, nor did they have artillery worth the name, they avoided pitched battles. But when they had to fight one, they would run away before the enemy, giving an impression that they were leaving the field. As the enemy pursued them, and was cut off from the main force, they would suddenly stop and attack, and inflict heavy loss on them. The method can be named as 'Hit and Run' method.

The usual form of warfare which the Sikhs followed was that of Guerilla.

The Sikhs because of their weakness in artillery had

developed Guerilla warfare a fine art. The important devices usually employed by them were hanging on flanks, obstructing passage of rivers, cutting of supplies, destroying messengers, attacking foraging parties and isolated detachments, hitting and running away, getting into the rear and recapturing conquered places, infesting camps, plundering baggage trains, complete evacuation of places in the immediate neighbourhood of the enemy's route of march, pursuing the fleeing troops, reprisals or threats of retribution afterwards against the deputies and the friends of the enemy and sweeping over the whole country immediately after his withdrawal. However, it is their running or continued skirmish which excited the greatest admiration of the contemporaries. Both Forster and George Thomas have given a graphic account of this. For example, former's account reads thus, "The predilection of the Sicques for the match-lock musket and the constant use they make of them causes a difference in their manner of attack from that of any other Indian Cavalry; a party from forty to fifty advance in a quick pace to a distance of carbine shot from the enemy, and then that the fire may be given with the greatest certainty, the horses are drawn up and their pieces discharged, when speedily retiring about a 100 paces, they load and repeat the same mode of annoying the enemy. Their horses have been so expertly trained to a performance of this operation that on receiving a stroke of hand they stop from a full career."<sup>1</sup>

### **Base Areas**

No account of military organisation of the Mislis is complete without referring to the base areas of the Sikh struggle. There were three major areas, namely, the Jammu-Kangra hills, the Lakhi Jungle and Malwa desert around Bhatinda. There were small base areas as well such as Kahnuwan swamps and the Bars or upland wastes of the Punjab. Of these base areas, Jammu-Kangra hills and the Lakhi Jungle were purely bases while in Malwa desert there were jungle-cum-popular type of permanent bases. The Kahnuwan swamps were good jungle operational bases.

Jammu and Kangra Hills were difficult to reach because of their height, thickness of the jungles and absence of proper modes of transportation and communication. The enemy always hesitated to chase the Sikhs once they entered the interior of this area. The

1. Forster, Vol. I, p. 332.



people of this area, too, did not bear any inveterate enmity towards the Sikhs. Lakhi jungle (the area having lakhs of trees) because of its locale at the trifurcation of the provinces of Multan, Lahore and the Sarkar of Sirhind and adjoined by the Patiala-Bhatinda Jullundur tracts where the population, mostly Jats, was sympathetic towards the Sikhs and their cause was obviously a better operational base area as compared with Jammu and Kangra hills whose population was not disposed favourably towards the Sikhs.

Malwa desert extended upto the borders of Bikaner where it joined the great Indian desert in the south and Grand Trunk Road in the north. It was in these wastes of Bhatinda that Guru Hargobind had sought safety after he had fallen out with the Mughals and before he had shifted to Kiratpur in the hills. Again it was in these waste lands that Guru Gobind Singh had migrated to after he was forced to evacuate Anandpur Sahib. The Sikhs preferred this area to all others as here they feel more secure. Apart from the fact that the population of this area was mostly Jat, out of which a sizeable section was a Sikh and hence sympathetic, the natural security was also not lacking.

The wild and unchartered nature of the country and scarcity of grass and water made pursuits difficult and major thrust impossible. An added advantage of this base area was that it formed part of Sirhind Sarkar of Delhi province and was thus outside the direct jurisdiction of the governors of the Punjab. The rivalry between the governors of the Punjab and those of Delhi, and the utter weakness of Delhi government of the day further gave the Sikhs much desired security.

Kahnuwan swamps, situated in the north of Lahore on the river Ravi formed the largest jungle operational base. It was covered with thick jungle reed and high grass. The Sikhs according to Giani Gian Singh, knew every branch and trace of this forest and moved as freely as a deer.<sup>1</sup> It was sufficiently secure and there was no fear of enemy penetrating into it in any strength. However, it was not tenable for a continuous period of time as the Sikhs learnt it at their cost during the holocaust of June, 1746. The other smaller bases of the Sikhs, Sandal Bar, Ganji Bar and Nili Bar were sparsely populated and completely cut off from the civilization due to difficulties of communications. These wastes were the habitat of nomadic tribes whose principal occupation was

---

1. *Shamsher Khalsa*, Amritsar, 1923, p. 75.

cattle-breeding and cattle-lifting. The Sikhs frequently used these areas as their short term bases.

### **Guerilla Area**

Guerilla area is the one whose population is disposed favourably towards the guerillas. Such areas are not a natural phenomenon, rather they are created and nourished. The larger the number of such areas, the greater are the chances of success of the guerillas. Initially, the Sikhs had smaller and fewer guerilla areas and these too in and around villages with which they were connected with ties of blood, caste or religion. A Sikh family offered a safe home to the Khalsa. According to the author of *Khulasat-ut-Twarikh*, "If a stranger knocks at their door at midnight and utters the name of Nanak, though he may be a thief, robber or wretch, he is considered a friend and brother and is properly looked after." The other section of the Punjab society from which they received ready support was the oppressed peasantry whose cause to Khalsa ideology took cognizance of. The low caste people who found Sikhism heralding a new era which would guarantee perfect social equality, dignity of labour and fundamental human rights also extended full help to the guerillas. No wonder, Polier observed that the Sikhs had connections in almost all parts of the country they visited on excursions. He found them "a nation and a power well-calculated for doing mischief and encouraging rebellion in the Zamindars or cultivators who often follow steps at first with a view to saving themselves and afterwards from the pleasure of independence.

Towards the middle of their struggle, the Sikhs were successful in carving out guerilla areas for themselves in Majha, Doaba and Malwa regions. At this stage, they introduced Rakhi. Rakhi system which could be successful only if the people harboured sympathy for the Khalsa. This also explains that Rakhi system was not an imposition rather an arrangement between the Khalsa and the people. Hence to label it 'a blackmail' is totally wrong.

### **Siege-craft**

The Sikhs at siege-craft were very poor as compared to the Marathas and the Mughals as they did not have heavy guns in a sufficient number. Therefore, they usually resorted to stratagems such as bribing the inmates, false pretexts, blockading with a view

to starving out the garrison etc. In defence, they were helpless against a determined enemy like Timur Shah who reconquered Multan from them in A.D. 1780.

### Camps

The Sikh camps were very humble affairs as compared with those of the Mughals and the Marathas. They had none of the comforts and luxuries of their Indian contemporaries. Life at their camps was noted for frugality, simplicity and austerity. There were no women in their camp. It was indeed most difficult to surprise the Sikhs. But otherwise their camps were as disorderly as those of the other Indians.

### No Central Military Organisation

The Sikhs failed to evolve any organisation or agency for overall control. They did evolve one in Sarbat Khalsa, but that was weak, for which the reasons were not far to seek because firstly it could exercise its authority only twice a year and secondly it had no force except moral one to compel its components (Misls) to implement its decisions. Even then it worked nicely as long as the Khalsa was engaged in life and death struggle, first against the Mughals and then against the Afghans; but as soon as the threat of invaders receded, its decisions began to be discarded. Gough and Innes rightly aver, "Any fighting machine must have a single controlling head, whereas the Sikh doctrines of brotherhood and equality made every chief kick at the idea of subordination." With the lapse of time various Sikh chiefs concerned themselves more with their own principalities than with the entire Panth with the result that they disdained any outside interference even of another Misdar. In the process, each Misl became an independent unit even militarily. The internecine wars of Misls carried the process of disintegration still further, so much so that Mr. Forster was led to predict the rise of some ambitious chief from the ruins of the Sikh commonwealth.

### Sikh Soldierly

No account of Military organisation of the Misls would be complete without depicting the character of the soldiers. Qazi Nur Muhammad, the celebrated author of *Jang Nama*, who came in the train of Ahmad Shah Abdali in A.D. 1764 writes about the Sikhs as under :

"In fact they are lions at the time of battle and when in festivities they surpass Hatim (in generosity). When they take hold of the Indian sword in hand, they gallop from Hind upto the country of Sind..... When they bend a bow, they set in it the foe-killing arrow. When they pull it up to the ear, the body of the enemy trembles like a cane. If their hatchet strikes a coat of mail, then this coat of mail, itself on the body of the enemy becomes a shroud. The body of each of them looks like a hillock and in grandeur excels fifty men. Bahram (a Persian Hero) killed wild asses and could frighten tigers. If Bahram Gor comes before them, he also would admit their superiority."<sup>1</sup>

The Sikh soldiers were firm as a rock of granite, clear about their project and unflinching in their resolve. Besides, they regarded the interests of the community superior to their own interests. The success would not swell their head as defeat could not break their heart. They were overflowing with the sense of optimism. They seldom resorted to cold-blooded murder even of their enemies, and respected the chastity of women as their faith and honour. Their valour in the field evoked admiration even in the unfeeling hearts. According to Dr. Hari Ram Gupta, "no superiority of his enemies in number, no stroke, no shot, no shell could make his heart quail since his Amrit, taken at the time of baptism, bound him to fight single-handed against millions. They could ply their swords, pliant as a cane and sharp as a razor, with perfect ease and dexterity while in the discharge of match-locks they were invariably dead shots."<sup>2</sup>

Shahmat Ali noted that "in enduring fatigue, absence from prejudices of caste, and patience of discipline, the Sikh is not easily surpassed." M'Gregor recorded that the Sikh soldier possessed iron legs. He could go on foot from Lahore to Amritsar and return in a single night covering a distance of 110 kms. On horse back, he could go in 24 hours about 400 kms or from Delhi to Ferozpur, 386 kms.

### **Appraisal of Misl Organisation**

Misl organisation was a response which the Sikhs fashioned to meet the challenges as also to reconstruct society on the basis

1. Qazi Nur Muhammad, *Jang Nama*, Statement No. 40.

2. Dr. H.R. Gupta, *A History of the Sikhs*, pp. 286-87.

of Sikh ideology. The Sikhs were simply bewildered at the connivance of the Mughal Emperor who surreptitiously encouraged Wazir Khan, the wily Subedar of Sirhind and very vibrant spokesman of the Naqshbandis to put an end to the moral frame of Guru Gobind Singh. The Guru's contrived death on 7/8 October 1708 immensely shocked the Sikhs. Still more shocking were the injunctions issued by the Mughal Emperor to finish their root and branch—their only fault being that they were 'Nanak Prast' the followers of Guru Nanak and his successors.

The Sikh immaculately oriented to face the heaviest of odds calmly and resolutely decided not to knuckle under rather to face the situation boldly and aggressively. Their leader Banda Singh Bahadur led them to challenge the Mughal rule which upto that time had turned synonymous with injustice, unitarian and anti-non-Muslims including the Sikhs. His purpose was two-fold, to finish the Mughal rule and replace it with the Khalsa rule based on Sikh ideological formation. He succeeded in as much as he established Khalsa sovereignty for about six years during which the plebeians enjoyed the glow of freedom of speech, worship, political and religious tyranny and rights to live, move and express without any fear. Feudalism was blunted the Mughal unitarianism received heavy blows. The people in general were provided congenial atmosphere to pursue their chosen occupations. Banda's own example was luminous; he behaved unlike Mughal potentates and ruled the people as just among the equals. He did not adopt usual royal paraphernalia of his age and contended himself with the dress and life-style of the people in general. Sikh mandarins under him also followed him. Humble and justice-loving as they were, they were much liked by the people. The golden age that was ushered in by the Khalsa rule came to an end when Banda Bahadur was captured at Gurdas Nangal and decapitated at Delhi along with his comrades at Mahroli.

Though Khalsa sovereignty had a brief spell yet it went down into the memories of the people as a very good model of government and governance. This fact alone was sufficient to sustain and boost the Sikhs as it in itself was a vindication of their stand that the Sikh ideology was a sure way to bring about improvement in the status of the people.

They soon regrouped to wage struggle first for their survival and then for asserting what they stood for.

For quite a long period, after the execution of Banda Singh

Bahadur, they had to face persecution and penalisation at the hands of the Mughal viceroys of the Punjab who were hell-bent to finish them totally as they found them not only totally committed to erode Mughal Imperialism as also its allies, communal Muslims and conservative Hindus, but also claiming to provide alternative framework of government and governance. The Sikhs reacted to the penalisation sharply and in the process they evolved specific model. They cultivated sense of *Charhdi Kala* through attuning themselves to the Guru Shabad which taught them to have unflinching faith in God; His all powerfulness, His inscrutable will, His parenting of the virtuous and His wrath for the wicked and the unrighteous. They also developed the vibrant self-awareness about the role as designed by their Gurus as members of Guru Panth. The Khalsa sociological formulation was another source of strength upon which the Sikhs fed themselves during the eighteenth century. They organised themselves into Misls, voluntary organisations, comprising equals—all soaked in Sikh ideology. The Misls were certainly no caste or class groups, nor did they comprise people of a particular area/areas. They were composed of people well aware of Sikh religion and the social ideology it propounded and preached. On many occasions these Misls combined together and framed action plans to face common enemy or to embark upon certain conquests. Such combinations were termed Dal Khalsa or Dal Khalsa Jeo and often had a supremo in some eminent personality. In the eighteenth century especially after 1748, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia had the privilege to enjoy this status. The concept of Guru Panth had completely gripped the Sikh mind, thanks to the efforts of Bhai Mani Singh and other such Sikhs and no wonder the Sikhs automatically thought and acted collectively. The genesis of the institution of Sarbat Khalsa undoubtedly lay in such thinking. Sarbat Khalsa could not be regarded as the certain government of the Sikhs nor could not be equated with the assembly of the Sikh chiefs; it was the entire body of the Khalsa or the whole Sikh people who met twice at Darbar Sahib complex in front of Sri Akal Takhat Sahib or at some other place in case of emergency or contingency before Guru Granth Sahib to take decisions pertaining to the welfare of the community as a whole. Though all the Sikhs were never present at Amritsar on any occasion and all the Sikhs present did not necessarily participate in meetings those who deliberated in the name of Sarbat Khalsa were regarded as doing



so on behalf of the entire body of the Khalsa. These decisions were called *Gurmata*s, because the Guru was assumed to be present among the Khalsa.

Collective thinking among the Sikhs, the institution of *Sarbat Khalsa Gurmata*, *Dal Khalsa* and *Guru Panth* etc. gave a peculiar solidarity which expressed itself not only at organisational level but also in the process of objectification of their mission and designs. This solidarity doubtlessly enabled them to survive the onslaughts of Mughals and Afghans in alignment with Muslim and non-Muslim religious elites looking askance upon the progressive overtones of the Khalsa ideology.

In the fifties of the eighteenth century, the Sikhs embarked upon occupying territories along with their violent struggle against the Afghans who were determined to establish their effective domination over the Punjab and at Delhi if possible. At this point of time the Sikhs resolved to oust them from the Punjab and establish their own rule. To this end, they worked their already established institution in a manner at once purposeful and appropriate. Meetings of *Sarbat Khalsa* took cognizance of the fast changing scenario and took decisions which were to provide guidelines to the Sikh chiefs as well as to the general Sikhs; *Gurmata*s earned sanctity never to be violated by any Sikh. *Dal Khalsa* acted as vanguard of the Sikhs, in almost all spheres—battlefields, society, government, governance and religion. The military system devised by *Dal Khalsa* reflected fresh approach. The Khalsa forces were not only camp followers but were active agents of furthering the cause of the Sikh ideology. *Dal Khalsa* was thus an organisation very comprehensive in its scope and arena of action. It was in this context that it was held in high esteem by the Sikhs. So much so many of the Sikhs looked upon it like fifth *Takhat*—seat of authority after four *Takhat*s. It never acted as a group of religious zealots or political fanatics—rather its actions exuded humanity and veritable sense of righteousness honeycombed by compassion. *Sardar/Misdar* was a new political status, never known to the history earlier. He was not a king or a dictator but first among the equals. He seldom imposed his will on his followers and associates who were independent and enjoyed equality in terms of rights. He/she never used symbols and paraphernalia relevant to the institution of kingship; nor did he/she flaunt the claim that he/she was a law unto himself/herself. Even after occupying territories, the *Sardars* did not cease to

behave to the contrary. In fact they were fully articulated by the Khalsa concept of kingship as delineated in Guru Granth Sahib. None other than God himself could claim to be sovereign, the primal source of authority/sovereignty being God. The human beings in whom He is permeated are to be considered holders of His spark in equal measure. Sovereignty could not be the privilege of a few or special ones; it could be held by anyone who had realised the truth of the aforesaid statement. Monarchical or oligarchical form of government or governance was not in consonance with the Sikh ideology as it negated the principle of social equality and concentrated power in individuals. The Sikhs therefore evolved government or polity which allowed everyone irrespective of station, caste, creed and status, to hold his/her head high in an atmosphere of freedom from fear and to participate in the governance freely and as a matter of right. The Misdars/Sardars did not infringe upon the fundamental freedom nor did they disallow human rights. They involved themselves in delivering good governance, providing resources and social ecology to enable the governed to improve their lot and to get riddance from outmoded tradition and contemporary political and social shackles besides acting as veritable agents of ushering in a revolution which was ecumenical in its scope and goals.

True to the Sikh ideological thrusts, the Sardars did not impose their suzerainty on Misdars or their associates. They treated them as their equals in all respects. They led joint expedition against enemies of the Khalsa and made territorial occupations, but, sparsely they quarrelled among themselves at least upto the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

But in the last three decades of the eighteenth century, the system started its downward journey. The Sardar/Misdar began to act like monarchs or Emperors—much like the contemporary Afghan/Mughal rulers. Their administration instead of forging ahead in its spirit and approach developed tendencies to follow the Mughal/Afghan pattern. Its allegiance to the Sikh ideology got substantially eroded. Jagirdari tenure which had been discouraged, began to find acceptability with the Sikh rulers. No exact figures are available but there is enough evidence to infer that generally about half of the revenues were alienated in Jagirs. Meetings of Sarbat Khalsa began to be taken nonseriously.

Superficial look upon the Sikh coins has led us to conclude that these were symbol of the collective sovereignty of the Sikhs.

The basic argument supportive of this fact is that inscriptions on these coins referred to political power as derived from Guru Nanak from God. The name of any individual chief does not appear on the coins.

But the factum of this fact differed in many cases. There were seals of the Sikh chiefs bearing their names and evoking God for help. Even the epithet *Khalsa ji* is often used for individual chief. Therefore it may be safely inferred that the coins current in the dominions of the Sikh chiefs declaring the common derivation of their power from the Guru or God ensured the sovereignty of each individual. This was in consonance with the fact that no Sikh chief acknowledged the overlordship of another whether Sikh or non-Sikh. The sovereignty of the individual Sikh chief was ambiguously expressed in his relations with other chiefs and his undivided and qualified control over his territories.

With the evaporation of external dangers from Afghanistan and threats from internal subversions by the Mughals, Marathas or any other organised political and social group, the Sikh rulers were no more united. They involved themselves in internecine warfare for no higher purpose. The quarrels raging among the Bhangis, the Kanhiyas, the Ramgarhias and the jealousy between Malwa and Majha Sikhs were eloquent illustrations to that effect.

In view of the steep degeneration that had overtaken the Misdari system, Dr. N.K. Sinhas' remarks were striking and very apt. He concluded that the dissolution of the Misl system was inevitable—the system which had enabled the Sikhs to survive and to dislodge Ahmad Shah Abdali from Punjab and to establish Khalsa sovereignty and to raise a bulwark, a dam of concrete against the encroachment of the floods from across the north western frontier. The Sikhs who had shown rare creativeness in forging the most appropriate response failed to harness their sovereignty to remould the destiny of the people in the light of Khalsa ideological formations. The Sikh rulers should have framed federation/confederation beside putting forth some comprehensive plan of governance, transcending parochialism of all types, guaranteeing human rights to all, creating an atmosphere congenial for all human beings to grow and develop unhindered, taking into cognizance of the activities and designs of the British, the mercantile forces getting strong in the contemporary India. But alas! the Sikh political leadership did not rise to the occasion and instead dissipated their energies on non-essentials which only

catered to their selfish interests. It is a sad commentary that out of 56 Sikh Misdars/Sardars in upper Doab and lower Doab of the Punjab, none exhibited requisite sagacity, tractability of mind and foresight to charter the right course for the Sikh polity to enable it to subsist and serve the cause of the people in future. Each Sikh Sardar very eagerly reverted to Mughal model of government and governance with the inevitable result that the progressive politico-social march of the people got impeded and the spirit relumed by the Sikh ideology was dampened.

## Chapter 14

# THE SIKH MISLS

Misl denotes a sort of association or a group. The word 'Misl' is an Arabic word which means 'equality' and according to some writers, since there was perfect equality between different Misls and within the Misls themselves, the associations (Jathas) began to be named as Misls. This word in Sikh history was first used by Guru Gobind Singh on the occasion of the battle of Bhangani in 1688. A large number of young-men had thronged to serve under the tenth Guru. He organised them into unit or groups of almost equal numbers each under a leader. These leaders enjoyed perfect equality with one another and were alike and similar in authority. Their followers were also equal among themselves and regarded their leaders, first among equals at the most. Kavi Sainapat, an eminent poet and scholar in the service of the Guru says, "that horsemen of Guru Gobind Singh immediately gathered in the battlefield (at Bhangani) under their own banners. The chiefs at the head of their Misls got busy in digging up trenches at their specified places. In the time of Banda Singh Bahadur, the Misls are also observed in the sense that they formed different groups or sections of the army of Banda Bahadur.<sup>1</sup>

According to Dr. Hari Ram Gupta, their number in the times of Guru Gobind Singh was five and under Banda Singh Bahadur eleven. After Banda Bahadur, the Sikhs also organised themselves into associations, Jathas or bands called by the name of Misl, although to begin with at least upto 1733 A.D., these organisations were loose and their number and the parameters of their activities were not explicitly defined or were ill-defined. From 1734 onwards it appeared that some sort of account of the activities of such associations began to be kept at Sri Akal Takhat Sahib. Since the assumption of the leadership of the Dal Khalsa by Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, the practice had been followed meticulously. According to Sita Ram Kohli, "These records or Misls helped resolve territorial disputes whenever and wherever they arose between the two

1. Sainapat, *Gursobha*.

Sardars. Cunningham also perceived the term Misl the same way."

Later as the time advanced, Misl began to be understood as the army of Sardar or territory under him. The understanding of David Ochterlony is altogether out of tune. He says that Misl meant a tribe or a race which it was not as the detailed account of the complexion of Misl would show. Bute Shah<sup>1</sup> avers that Misl was a territory conquered by a Sardar with the help of his comrades and placed under his protection. This view is farfetched and contrary to the ground situation. Cunningham's linking of Misl to the term Musluhut which armed men and warlike people also does not do justice to the correct meaning and nature of Misl.<sup>2</sup>

According to another view, files were kept by the Akalis at Amritsar in which the territorial acquisitions of each Misl were entered separately to avoid confusion. Since Persian equivalent of file is Misl, the name Misl was assigned to the different Sikh associations.

### **Emergence of Misls**

The emergence of the Sikh confederacies was a phenomenon rooted in the history and philosophy of the Sikhs. They being a distinct religious group were committed to establish a new order of the society in consonance with the Sikh ideology, organised themselves in different associations.

Some scholars have tried to give the impression that these jathas owed their existence to the instinct of self-preservation on the part of the Sikhs against the ever-mounting Mughal atrocities. This view is true to some extent and it formed only one aspect of the whole thing. They, to be more fair, should not ignore another aspect which was at once positive and abiding. The Sikhs imbued with the spirit of establishing the rule of the Khalsa ardently desired to evolve an organisation to give a local habitation to their plans and objectives. They organised themselves under Banda Singh Bahadur, and after his failure, they must organise themselves again. So in our view the emergence of the confederacies was caused not only by the atrocities of the Mughals or of the Afghans but also by the positive content of their ideology with which they were surcharged.

In this process the economic factor also contributed a lot. In this connection Ahmad Shah Batalia says, "In every Parganah,

1. Bute Shah, *Twarikh-i-Punjab* Daftar, IV, (1848).

2. Quoted by T.D. Cunningham (ed. 1958), p. 97.



Zamindars and Qanungos had thrown to winds even semblance of law and had caused anarchy to prevail. The officials, incharge of the collection of the land revenue, were rapacious and had in fact started squeezing the last penny which the people had. The result was that the cultivators left their lands and joined the Sikh associations." Besides this, political uncertainty coupled with complete lawlessness especially after Mir Mannu, so impressed upon the people that they shifted their loyalties to the Sikhs associations who held promises to them that they would protect their lives and property, and it was because of this change in their attitude that many villages extended shelter to the Sikhs, caring little for the rulers who were all out to crush them.<sup>1</sup>

The nucleuses of most of these associations were provided by those Sikhs who fought under the leadership of Banda Singh Bahadur and after his defeat and execution had taken shelter in some hide-outs where-from they conducted sporadic raids. These hide-outs were quite large in number and in the words of Ahmad Shah Batalia, they were four hundred. To begin with, these hide-outs were called 'Deras'. Gradually as the demoralization that had overtaken the Sikhs wore out, after the death of Banda Singh Bahadur the Sikhs once again began to assert to be identified and put up resistance to the oppressive policies of the government. This impulse which was natural to spring in Sikh hearts soaked in Sikh ideology became intenser and fiercer when the government took a fresh resolve to destroy the Sikhs root and branch. In view of all this, more conscious among the Sikhs became determined never to bend and this being their frame of mind, they joined the extant 'deras' in a large number or formed new 'deras'.

To begin with, the number and size of deras or associations were small but then such associations grew larger both in number and size. According to Ahmad Shah Batalia, the number was four hundred.<sup>2</sup> Since it was not possible for so many associations to act in concert promptly either against the enemy or to promote the welfare of the community, the number was reduced to sixty-five.

On march 29, 1748, the number was again reduced to eleven<sup>3</sup>

1. Lt. Col. Steinbach, p. 11.

2. *History of the Sikhs* by W.L.M. Gregor, p. 118.

3. Often Phulkian Misl is considered as a Misl and the number of Misls is thus raised to twelve, but we have preferred not to include Phulkian Misl among the list of Misls because in our opinion it did not partake of the nature of a Misl.

under the advice of Sardar Kapur Singh and other leaders, each with a distinct banner, title but varying in strength. The decision was taken at Akal Takhat. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was designated as supreme commander in place of Nawab Kapur Singh. Each of the eleven associations had its separate chief, and a separate name. After some time these military associations began to be called Misl.

No definite rule was followed while giving name to a Misl. It may be relevant in this connection to note that the name borne by a Misl was not always connected with its founder. The name Kanhiya, for instance, embodies a tribute to the eminence of Jai Singh among the associates of Amar Singh, the original founder of the association. At no stage did the members of this association belong to Jai Singh's village Kanha Kachha. In fact, various modes and modalities were followed while naming the Misls. A couple of Misls were given the name after the village of the chief. Ahluwalia Misl is called so because Jassa Singh belonged to the village named Ahlu. Similarly Sukarchakia Misl was named after the village Sukarchak in Gujranwala district. Dallewalias and Faizulpurias also were named after the villages of their respective chiefs. Sometimes, the Misl was named after the nature of its leaders, as for instance, Bhangi Misl was called so because its leader Hari Singh was an addict of 'Bhang' a sort of Narcotic. The Ramgarhia Misl got its name from its leader, Jassa Singh, whose name was connected with the fort Ram Rauni of the Sikhs. Similarly Phulkian Misl received its name after its ancestor Phul by name. The Misl Nishanwalia was called so because its leaders were standard bearers.

Historians are divided with regard to the number of the Misls. On the Baisakhi of 1748, eleven associations (Misls) were formed but if we add Phulkian Misl<sup>1</sup> which came into being on the east of Sutlej, the number rises to twelve. According to Lepel Griffin and Ibbetson, some Misls were so small in size that it would be better to call them camps instead of Misls; but still for convenience sake, we will proceed considering all of them full-fledged Misls (confederacies).

The founders of several Misls had come from the time of

---

1. In our opinion Phulkian Misl should not be designated as 'Misl' because in its emergence and configuration, it bore little similarity to other Misls.

Banda. The founder of the Bhangi Misl, for instance, had actually fought in Banda's army. The association of the Singhs with these leaders was voluntary and succession to leadership was not necessarily determined by kinship. For example, Bhuma Singh and Natha Singh and Jagat Singh became the willing associates of Chhajja Singh Bhangi and, on his death, Bhuma Singh became the leader. On Bhuma Singh's death, the leadership of the Misl went to his associate Hari Singh, while Natha Singh and Jagat Singh founded a 'dera' of their own.

The territories were generally occupied separately by the Misls, but there were cases where territories were occupied jointly by more than two Sardars, as for example, Kanhyias and the Ramgarhias jointly occupied Batala. After the conquest of Kasur, Ramgarhias, Bhangis and Kanhyias established their joint rule over Kasur.

Similarly Mehraj was jointly administered by all the Phulkian chiefs. Amritsar belonged to almost all the Sardars. In Amritsar, they had their own fortresses and Katras or Bazaars, as for instance, Bhangi and Kanhiya Misls had Katra Bhangian and Katra Kanhiya. They managed their portions of the town efficiently. All the taxes and octroi charges collected in the town of Amritsar were made over to the management of the Golden Temple. According to Ahmad Shah Batalia, this system worked well in the beginning although later on there were mutual rivalries and disputes.<sup>1</sup>

### **Formation of the Misls**

The process of the formation of Misls had a method which was rooted in the sociology of the people. In the eighteenth century, there were number of villages bound by social and occupational specialization. What was formerly termed the 'self-sufficiency' of the Indian village, actually referred to the 'self-sufficiency' of a group of villages, tied to each other through the reciprocal relations of their village specialists, who migrated around to other villages within their sphere. There were also marriage relations among the villages, since Punjabi villagers referred to, marry outside their own village. These groups of villages formed smallest viable and functional social units.

These units under the stress of historical circumstances became politically oriented and rallied round a leader known as

---

1. Ahmad Shah Batalia, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

Misldar or Sardar, thereby giving a distinct character to a Misl which was formed, by and large, of the people belonging to the same geographical unit or to the same caste. There was, no doubt, no restriction for any member of the Misl to shift his allegiance to any Sardar, yet the social composition of the Misl was not much different from what has been aforesaid. The extension or enlargement of the Misl was also affected by other units or combination joining a particular Misl. The later dominance of Sukarchakia Misl and the rise to power of Ranjit Singh would indicate a steady building up, from groups of villages which were related through functional specialization and marriage to larger geographical units formed by combination and finally to the centralized Sikh Empire with Ranjit Singh as its head.<sup>1</sup>

The character of the Misls changed considerably after the territorial occupation had been effected. The large number of associates or followers who joined the most reputed leaders increased their striking power which, in turn, was reflected in the extent of territories occupied by the various Misls. Within the Misl itself, the chief was likely to acquire larger territories than that of any other member of the Misl and thus, the pre-eminence which he had enjoyed as a commander was consolidated through the acquisition of larger resources. He would naturally expect his Misldars to continue acknowledging his superior status, thus defection from one Misl to another against the wishes of the chief would be discouraged by him. For instance, Nand Singh who was an associate of Jhanda Singh Bhangi had occupied Pathankot and when he transferred it to his son-in-law Tara Singh Kanhiya, Ganda Singh Bhangi attempted to wrest it from the Kanhiya Sardar. It is not clear, however, whether or not the right claimed by the chief over his Misldars was justified by the original, although informal, terms of association.<sup>2</sup>

In the early phases of the Misl organisation, the Sardars and Misldars did not follow either law of premogeniture or principle of heredity in matters of succession; in their case merit was the determinant of succession. Nawab Kapur Singh was succeeded by Khushal Singh, Sahib Singh and Khushal Singh Meetu—not related

---

1. Also study, Marian W. Smith's 'The Misl: A Structural Village-Group of India and Pakistan', in *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (Jan.-March 1952) pp. 41-56.

2. Dr. J.S. Grewal, *From Guru Nanak to Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, p. 89.

to Kapur Singh. But as Misl acquired the character of territorial power and the danger of foreign invasions ebbed, the succession tended to the hereditary. The Sardars or Misldars developed the tendency to make sure that they should be succeeded by their eldest male son or other sons or nephews or their widows as regents of their minor wards as for example, Khushal Singh Lamba was succeeded by his sons Budh Singh and Sudh Singh and Fateh Singh Kanahiya by his nephew Jaimal Singh. Similarly Jassa Singh Ahluwalia adopted his nephew Bhag Singh. The induction of the principle of succession in the structure of the Misls effected a drastic change in the nature of the Misls. The Misls lost their democratic character and tended to be monarchical. This thing, in turn, had another effect which was that the pride of participation on the part of the members of a particular Misl for some common cause of the Panth was substituted by the principle of loyalty to individual Sardars—the phenomenon which proved harmful to the principle of struggle which the tenth Guru framed, expounded and preached as also to the balanced growth of the Sikh community.

### *Political History of the Misls*

#### **I. Ahluwalia Misl**

The Misl was founded by Sadda Singh who was Jat by race and Kalal (wine distiller) by profession and lived seven miles east of Lahore in a village named Ahlu which gave its name to the Misl. Sadda Singh had four sons, Gopal Singh, Hamir Singh, Sekandar Singh and Chaka. Gopal Singh had three sons, namely Gurbakhsh Singh, Sadar Singh and Badar Singh. Badar Singh married the sister of Bhag Singh, more well known as Bhagu, a powerful chief, who was baptised by Nawab Kapur Singh. Bhag Singh's sister gave birth to a son in 1718. This newly born babe was the famous Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, who was destined to play a significant role in the History of the Punjab.

When Jassa Singh was only five years, his father died and the responsibility of the nurture of the child fell on the shoulders of his widowed mother. She once went to seek the benediction of Mata Sundri, who was pleased to give him a silver mace as a gift and predicted that the child would one day be a great man. After this, Jassa Singh along with his mother began to live with his maternal uncle Bhag Singh, at Jullundur. Latif writes, "Once when Kapur Singh went to Bhag Singh's house, he was greatly

pleased at seeing the latter's widowed sister playing on the Rabab, with her long loose hair dishevelled, singing ballads, in adoration of the Guru, her beautiful little son, Jassa Singh, playing by her side.<sup>11</sup> Kapur Singh praised the lady for her faith in the Guru and requested her to give him the charge of her cute and smart boy. The mother at once acceded to the request and from that moment, Kapur Singh treated Jassa Singh as his own son.

Bhag Singh fell fighting against the Imperial forces in Haryana. Since he was issueless, his wealth and property passed on to Jassa Singh. With such rich inheritance, and under the able guidance of Nawab Kapur Singh, he developed his personality in all its aspects. He had requisite qualities of leadership, a broad vision, sharp grasping power, and requisite tractability, besides being a great general and an effective missionary. The Sikhs loved him and thought it a privilege to take the baptism of double-edged sword at his hands. Amar Singh, the son of Ala Singh and many others were administered 'Pahul' by him.

### *Early Ventures of Jassa Singh*

When he touched twenty-one, he played a remarkable part in organising raids on the forces of Nadir Shah when the latter after the sack of Delhi (1739) proceeded back to his country, Persia.

Shortly after, Jassa Singh built the fort of Dalewal on the bank of the Ravi. In 1743, he carried away the treasure being carried from Eminabad to Lahore. Zakariya Khan was piqued at this and asked Adina Beg to teach a lesson to the Sikhs. Jassa Singh escaped into the forest in the vicinity of Sotlej. In the meanwhile, hundreds of Sikhs were captured and brought to Lahore where at Shaheed Ganj they were tortured to death.

Almost simultaneous to all this, Jassa Singh came out of his hiding place and punished the miscreant Muslim officers and captured an extensive territory.

In 1747, Jassa Singh attacked Kasur, but just at this time, Abdali appeared in the Punjab. The Sikhs had to suffer a defeat in the neighbourhood of Sirhind.

When Ahmad Shah Abdali left Punjab for Afghanistan, Jassa Singh attacked Gurditta Mal, an assistant of Mir Mannu in Hoshiarpur. Then Jassa Singh attacked Salabat Khan who had been

1. Sayyad Mohammad Latif, *History of the Punjab*, p. 314.



put as incharge of Amritsar and after slaying him seized a good portion of his district.

### *Head of Dal Khalsa 1748*

The Sikhs celebrated Baisakhi (March 29, 1748) at Amritsar, after a long interval. On this occasion Nawab Kapur Singh begged the Khalsa to be relieved of his office, and at his suggestion, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was chosen the supreme commander of the Dal Khalsa.

In the meanwhile, circumstances took a new turn. Safdar Jang, the new Wazir of Delhi, was determined to wrest power from Mannu and to this effect he secured from the Emperor the governorship of Multan for Shah Nawaz Khan, who at his instance dismissed the men of Mir Mannu who naturally felt upset and irritated. In this frame of mind he ordered his Diwan, Kaura Mal to march on Multan. In this project, he got the help of the Sikhs at the suggestion of his Diwan. Jassa Singh willingly offered the help and received a rich share of booty after Shah Nawaz Khan was killed in the battle and Multan submitted to Muin.

### *Leader of the Entire Community*

In A.D. 1753, Kapur Singh died and with his death the leadership of the entire Sikh community passed on into the hands of Jassa Singh. Sir Lepel Griffin says, "Kapur Singh was, as long as he lived, the first of the Sikh Sardars, though Jassa Singh had obtained more than the lion's share of the fame. When Kapur Singh was on the verge of death, he made over to Jassa Singh the steel mace of the last Guru, thus appointing him, as it were, the successor to his influence which Jassa Singh, by his ability and courage considerably increased."<sup>1</sup>

Soon after, the Lahore government followed the policy of persecution against the Sikhs once again. In 1753, Aziz Khan was sent at the head of a large force who was utterly routed by Jassa Singh. In December 1753, after the death of Muin-ul-Mulk, he established his headquarter at Fatehbad on the right bank of river Beas. The place remained his capital upto 1780, when he shifted to Kapurthala.

Ahluwalia chief defeated Adina Beg at Kadar in 1755 and wrested from him the territory of Fatehbad. Umed Khan, a

1. Sir Lepel Griffin, *The Rajas of the Punjab*.

commander of Adina Beg, was also killed just at this time. Shortly after this, he defeated Aziz Khan who had been sent by Adina Beg to have yet another trial with the Ahluwalia Chief.

### *Expulsion of Timur Shah and Jahan Khan*

Jassa Singh could hardly brook the Afghan rule under Timur Shah to strike root in the Punjab. He, therefore, joined the confederacy of the Marathas, which was brought into being by Adina Beg who had been forced to pay exacting amount and then driven to the hills to seek shelter. Timur Shah and his general Jahan Khan had to leave Punjab under pressure of the opposition. The prestige of Jassa Singh and Dal Khalsa mounted; the impression went round that the Khalsa could adjudicate the destiny of the Punjab.

On the retirement of Ahmad Shah Abdali from the Punjab in 1761, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia attacked Khwaja Mirza Khan ex-governor of Lahore then in charge of Chahar Mahal or the four districts of Aurangabad (Jhelum), Gujrat, Sialkot and Pasrur. In July 1761 Saadat Khan and Sadiq Beg Khan Afridis, the faujdars of Jullundur Doab were defeated. Sirhind was also plundered.

### *Issuance of Coin—November 1761*

In 1761, Ahmad Shah fought third battle of Panipat. When he was engrossed in the battle, there was a complete breakdown of administration at Lahore. The Sikhs, making most of the opportunity, spread their plundering activities over the whole province and occupied different territories. Sirhind was sacked once again, and the Sikhs occupied Dogar and Nypal in the Ferozepur district, Jagraon and Isa Khan on the left side of the Sutlej, together with Hoshiarpur, Bhiroz and Naraingarh. Rai Ibrahim Bhatti was also forced to submit and a levy was raised from him. An attempt was made to snatch Jhang from Ahmad Khan Sial, the chief of the place, but it was not crowned with success.

When Ahmad Shah Abdali retired from India having won the battle of Panipat, the Sikhs under Sardar Ahluwalia harassed his forces while they were retracing their steps to their own country. Soon after, Ubed Khan, who was appointed the governor of Punjab by Ahmad Shah, had to face the attack engineered by the Sardar. Jassa Singh sacked the city of Lahore and killed Ubed Khan. On this occasion it is said that he issued coins on which the following lines were inscribed :

"Sikka Zad Dar Jahan Ba-Fazal-e-Akal  
Mulk-e-Ahmad Grift Jassa Kalal."

(i.e. coined by the Grace of God in the country captured by Jassa Kalal).

But it does not seem to be correct. It is very improbable that any Sikh ruler such as Jassa Singh who was suffused with Sikh ideology should have issued a coin in his own name, and that too a clipped name, i.e. mere 'Jassa' instead of 'Jassa Singh'. In reality the local Muslims and Mullahs felt very perturbed on Jassa Singh's occupation of Lahore and the establishment of his badshahi (kingdom) there. They struck a few coins and sent the same to Ahmad Shah merely to provoke him to march against the Sikhs.<sup>1</sup>

He pillaged Sirhind after this. He also seized the territories of Laliana, Goindwal, Saliala, Pphala and Tam Taran. Across the Beas, Sultanpur and Talwandi were occupied.

In A.D. 1762 Ahmad Shah Abdali re-attacked, this time with a view to mitigating the menace of the rising power of the Sikhs. He very adroitly and without much row reached Kup near Malerkotla, where the Sikhs were resting. As the Sikhs were taken by surprise, they suffered terrifically and the event, is, therefore, known as Big Holocaust (Wadda Ghallughara). Jassa Singh Ahluwalia did his best to organise defensive battle and the credit goes to him that in spite of the vast number of deaths of the Sikhs, he was able to make an impression of the strength of the Sikhs. The Sikh leaders could not be frightened and Sardar Jassa Singh effected his escape and fled to the Kangra hills.

Immediately after the return of Abdali, he in co-operation with the Ramgarhia, Kanhiya and Bhangi Misls defeated Alif Khan, the Pathan chief of Kasur and handed over his territory to the Bhangis. In March 1763 Jassa Singh accompanied the Dal Khalsa to Anandpur to celebrate the 'Hala. On the complaint of the Sikhs, Jassa Singh punished Gole Khan of Kathgarh and the Zamindars of Shankargarh who often harassed the Sikh pilgrims. He then established military posts at Balachaur and Kathgarh to keep vigil over the activities of refractory element. The Rajas of Bilaspur and Nalagarh were made to pay tribute to the Dal Khalsa. He also

1. Ganesh Das Wadhwa, *Chahar Bagh-i-Punjab*, Amritsar 1965, pp. 130-31 (1855); Lapel Griffin holds Badehra's version as correct (*The Rajas of the Punjab*), p. 461.

C.L. Rogers also agrees with Ganesh Das (*Asiatic Society Journal*) 1881-1882, 71-93.

seized Kot Isa Khan from Qadir Bakhsh. The combined forces of the Dal Khalsa, numbering about 23,000 fell upon Sirhind once again and slaving Zain Khan sacked the city of Sirhind (January 1764).

In the winter of 1764, when Ahmad Shah Abdali invaded India for the seventh time, the Sikhs hovered around his rear delivering sallies on it whenever they got a chance. At Kunjpura, which was a Pathan colony, the invader made a halt for introspection. He was dismayed to find that whatever plunder he laid his hands upon on the way, had been snatched by the Sikhs. Very prudentially he abandoned the project of advancing onward and decided to return home. He crossed the river Sutlej at Machhiwara. On the western side of the river his passage was blocked by the Sikhs under the overall command of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. Qazi Nur Mohammad, who was in the camp of Ahmad Shah Abdali recorded in his book *Jang Nama* that in the fight Jassa Singh was at the centre standing like a mountain. For full seven days, Ahmad Shah Abdali suffered harassment at the hands of the Sikhs. From Sutlej to Beas, Abdali was not allowed any respite. In 1766 Abdali again entered the Punjab, but only to feel convinced that he would never be able to establish his rule in the Punjab/India. He wrote to Jassa Singh Ahluwalia urging him to negotiate with him for peace. The offer was rejected with impunity by Jassa Singh. Abdali had to return from Ismailabad, 30 kms south of Delhi.

By the general concurrence of the Khalsa, Jassa Singh in April 1764 laid fresh foundation of Hari Mandir<sup>1</sup> which had been blown up by the vindictive Durrani.

Moving across the Sutlej in 1768, Jassa Singh sacked Ghaziud-Din Nagar and Anup Shahr in the neighbourhood of Delhi and routed the troops of Mirza Sukhan, a Mughal General, who had been sent against him. He captured Raikot in 1771 and wrested Kapurthala from Rai Ibrahim Bhatti in A.D. 1778.

By this time, the political landscape in Punjab as also in the rest of India, had considerably changed. The threat of Abdali invasion had ceased to loom large in the horizon, and Delhi had absolutely gone out of gear. The Sikh Misls under these

---

1. He entrusted this work first to Sahib Rae Chaudhari and later on to Bhai Des Raj. Jassa Singh himself stayed at Amritsar for most of the time for four years until the buildings were completed at a cost of 14 lakhs. He had already built Katra Ahluwalia in 1759.

circumstances had embarked upon the course of territorial occupation and now they, to all intents and purposes, had assumed the functions of a state. Naturally, this thing brought about a change in their thinking and now they were rather more political rulers than mere idealists, working for the emancipation of the Punjab from the Mughal or Afghan fetters. This being so, quarrels began to take place between them.

There was one such clash between the Ahluwalia and the Ramgarhia Misls. In A.D. 1776, the Ahluwalia chief, invited the Sukarchakia, the Kanhiyas and the Bhangis to his assistance and in a war that was declared against the Ramgarhias, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia had to face discomfiture and flee to the Hariana region, leaving his possessions on the right side of the Sutlej into the hands of the allies (1778).

#### *Jassa Singh and Inter-Misl conflicts*

As far as it was possible Jassa Singh Ahluwalia did not embroil himself in inter-Misl conflicts. If at all he took part that was done primarily due to bring about rapprochement among them or to create climate so that such events ceased to recur. He never lost sight of the fact that he was a leader of the Khalsa Panth as a whole. In 1774, Jhanda Singh Bhangi was killed by Jai Singh Kanhiya's hired assassin. This event sparked off violent hostility between Ganda Singh (brother of Jhanda Singh Bhangi) and Jai Singh Kanhiya. In the battle fought at Dina Nagar in 1774, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia supported Jai Singh who came out victorious. But then to bridle the ambition of Jai Singh, he bolstered up the moral of the Bhangi Sardar which had considerably sagged due to their humiliation in the battle of Dina Nagar. He got Raja Amar Singh's son Sahib Singh betrothed to the daughter of Ganda Singh Bhangi. He also got married the daughter of his cousin Bhag Singh Ahluwalia to Gujjar Singh Bhangi's eldest son Sukha Singh one of the trioka of Lahore. Through matrimonial alliances, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia brought Patiala rulers near to the Bhangi Sardars. Where as this thing tampered the pride of Jai Singh Kanhiya who by befriending Sukarchakia Misl started entertaining dreams dictating terms to weak Misldars, it also minimised the chances of mutual eruptions because no one Sardar was powerful enough to tilt the scale in his favour or in favour of anyone else.

*Jassa Singh Ramgarhia's Relations with Patiala Rulers*

Excepting Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia's stance vis-a-vis all other Misdars was always that of a patriarch, ever eager to extend help to them. In 1765, Ala Singh purchased the title of 'Raja' from Ahmad Shah Abdali by offering him rich present and a huge sum of three and a half lakhs of rupees. This aroused the ire of the Khalsa because in their reckoning this act tantamounted to not only surrendering the sovereignty to Ahmad Shah Abdali but also blasphemed their sacred resolve that they would not recognise any mortal much less Abdali or Mughal Emperors as their sovereign. Hari Singh Bhangi along with some other Sardars of Taruna Dal led an expedition to punish Ala Singh. In the battle of the village Langha Laeli, a chance shot killed Hari Singh thereby enabling Ala Singh to save himself from rigours of fight.

Jassa Singh Ahluwalia chose to keep himself away from the battle because he considered the action of Hari Singh Bhangi and his allies too impulsive. He made out that Ala Singh acted in duress and not with the intention of defying the Khalsa or befriending the Afghans. Nor did he mean to violate any Gurmata or the sacred resolve of the Khalsa. Ala Singh therefore, needed to be excused. To erode his strength by attacking him would mean that the Sikhs would be smashing the bulwark which he served in the cis-Sutlej region against the rulers of Delhi or Ahmad Shah Abdali. Jassa Singh's advocacy ultimately succeeded in convincing the Sardars who gave up their stipulated project of teaching Ala Singh a lesson.

Abdul Ahad, a minister of the Mughal Empire, invaded Patiala in September 1779. He demanded a heavy tribute from Maharaja Amar Singh. Jassa Singh rushed to his help along with Tara Singh Ghaiba Dallewalia and Khushal Singh Singhpuria. Abdul Ahad got frightened and retired. In 1781, Mirza Shafi, an Imperial general of Delhi led a campaign against the Sikh Chiefs of Budha Dal who had settled at Karnal and Ambala districts. He invited Amar Singh of Patiala to join him. In response, Amar Singh readily agreed and ordered his troops to march towards Patiala. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia at once swung into action and attacked Patiala. Baghel Singh and other Sardars blocked the advancement of Patiala troops towards Ambala. Amar Singh had to recall his forces and settle terms with Dal Khalsa. Lest Amar Singh be treated 'hatable', Jassa Singh attended the marriage of Sahib Singh, son of Amar Singh with the



daughter of Ganda Singh Bhangi to vicariously convey the message that the higher purpose demanded restraints and mutual good-will.

### *In the Red Fort Delhi (March 1773)*

March 1773 was the most momentous period of Jassa Singh's life as also of the Sikhs. He advanced upon Delhi at the head of Dal Khalsa. By this time, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia had built his fortune in Hansi-Hissar region. Learning about the advancement of Dal Khalsa, he also marched to Delhi to participate in the project of Dal Khalsa. The Dal's thrust was so vigorous that the Mughal Emperor could only offer even a feeble resistance. As a result, Dal entered the red Fort on March 21, 1773. In a flush of victory, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was seated on the throne of the Mughal emperor and was adorned with the title of 'Badshah Singh'. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia challenged him on the ground that in Khalsa polity there is no place for a king, and no one howsoever great one might be, could lay claim to such title without the unanimous decision of the whole Panth. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia in deference to the high principles stepped down the throne and gave up the title.

### *In-roads into Gangetic Doab*

Jassa Singh led many in-roads into the Gangetic Doab and the crown lands around Delhi. His purpose was three fold—to collect wealth, to demoralise the Mughal marauders and rulers, to make out that the Sikhs had emerged as an independent political power, determined to be recognised as such and to demonstrate that they were capable of playing a decisive role in the politics of Delhi.

His occupation of Red Fort in 1773 was an event, very important not only in physical sense but also in its far reaching political ramifications. It epitomised the political aspirations of the Khalsa that is to say that the Mughal rule should be put to an end and the period of Khalsa sovereignty should be ushered in.

### *Jassa Singh and the British*

British activities in the western part of India especially in Bengal and Behar could not escape the sharp eyes of Jassa Singh. The British on their part were also vigilant about the political pulse of the country. Warren Hastings sent James Brown to the court of Mughal Emperor at Delhi to watch and report what transpired

at Delhi, especially in regard to the activities of the Sikhs. The British interest at that time was that Shah Alam should not accept the hegemony of the Sikhs whom they considered dangerously ambitious. On reaching Delhi, James Brown wrote to Baghel Singh, then controlling imperial capital, that the British could be happy to have cordial relations with the Sikhs. Lakhpat Rai who was a plenipotentiary of Baghel Singh at the court of Shah Alam informed him that Jassa Singh Ahluwalia 'who is the highest and the greatest in that country called Badshah Singh and Baghel Singh' feel honoured to reciprocate. In another letter, Brown held out prospects of sincere friendship on the condition of their not plundering the Gangetic Doab and the crown lands. Lakhpat Rai sent another letter enclosing with it the letters from Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Lehna Singh Bhangi of Lahore, Baghel Singh from Delhi and Sahib Singh of Patiala—all vouchsafing their goodwill for the British.

Jassa Singh Ahluwalia died in 1783 at Amritsar and a monument to perpetuate his memory was erected near the memorial of Baba Atal, just near the Golden Temple.

Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was a many-faceted personality—each facet having its own charm and importance. Physically, he was handsome with impressive face, tall stature, muscular body, long arms and sturdy legs, wheatish colour, broad forehead and big chest. His talk was always as sweet as honey, and his actions as firm as a rock. He had the softness of an ascetic and strength of a demon-killer. He bore thirty-two scars of sword-cuts and bullet marks on the front part of his body and none on his back. He had a Herculean strength. His breakfast consisted of one kg. of flour, half kilogram of butter, one-fourth of a kg. of sugar and one bucketful of butter milk (Lassi). One he-goat sufficed for his two meals. He was full with the mission of Guru Gobind Singh and all his gestures and overtures bore its mark. He was humble and had sharp sensitivity to perceive the under-currents in cases of men and matters. He had a big heart and ran a public kitchen (langar) at Kapurthala from which hundreds got full food. He was fully alive to the dangers that had gripped the Sikhs. The Sikh institutions were yet to take root just as the Sikh concept were to take concrete shape. Politically, the Sikhs were hardpressed by the Mughal governors and those of Ahmad Shah Abdali. During this critical period, he led the Sikhs successfully. He made the idea of Guru Panth an integral part of the Sikh psyche. He made efforts

that the Sikhs should look upon Sri Akal Takhat as the supreme religio-political seat by arranging meets of Sarbat Khalsa at that place to pass Gurmatas. He organised and led Dal Khalsa so creditably that it served not only a veritable instrument to establish Khalsa Sovereignty but it also promoted the cause of Sikh religion. He encouraged singing of Gurbani, the Guru's word, popularly known as Kirtan in Sikh religious parlance. He himself was a great singer of the hymns from Sri Guru Granth Sahib. He was deeply religious and took pains to spread the Guru's Gospel, always through decent means. Some of the great Sikh chiefs such as Amar Singh of Patiala took Pahul from him.

At political level, his role was laudable. His creativeness evolved institutions such as Misdari and Rakhi. He perfected the art of Guerrilla warfare which fact was largely responsible for the success of the Khalsa against the Mughals and the Afghans. He occupies a very important place in the history of the Sikhs as he did more than any other chief to consolidate Sikh power in the most critical period.

By ensuing the rise of Sikh power in the Punjab, he raised a bulwark against the invaders from across the north western frontier. Juxtaposed with this, it can safely be surmised that whereas Jassa Singh Ahluwalia enabled the Sikhs to establish their sovereignty, he also made India safe for the Indians to design their own destiny.

Jassa Singh was famous for his courage and manfulness. Griffin styles him a most successful general in the field. His movements, his formations and war-strategy, even in difficult engagements, speak volumes of his military craft.

"He was called King (Padshah) by his followers though not by the general body of the Khalsa, and was a man of very generous habits enriching his followers with liberal gifts. He was a great patriot and always ready to risk his life and liberty for the sake of his countrymen and for his own faith. Once upon a time, Ahmad Shah was carrying away as a prize, a large number of women and girls from India. News was brought to Jassa Singh. He started pursuit of the Shah and making a successful night attack upon his camp rescued the innocent creatures and providing them liberally with money and other necessaries, sent them all under proper escorts to their respective homes. From that day, Jassa Singh came to be called as a liberator."<sup>1</sup>

This act of chivalry and patriotism not only endeared Jassa

1. G.C. Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*, p. 151.

Singh to all classes of the Hindus and increased his power and influence but also tended to enhance the prestige and popularity of the Sikhs.

Jassa Singh was a tolerant ruler and he permitted his Muslim subjects and employees to follow their own religious observances without any fear. He, however, did not permit the Muslims to kill cows, understandably to eliminate one of the causes for breeding tension between the Hindus and Muslims. Griffin is palpably wrong when he labels Jassa Singh as a "thorough bigot" on this account.

Jassa Singh had no son and consequently his cousin Bhag Singh succeeded him. This chief did not acquire any new territory but was most of the time engaged in fighting with the rival chief, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia who, in conjunction with the Raja of Kangra defeated Ahluwalia under the command of Hamir Singh in 1801. Bhag Singh hastened back to Kapurthala where he died the same year. His mausoleum near Devi Talab stands to the present day.

Fateh Singh, his only son succeeded to the estate of Bhag Singh.

He was an able man and a great general. Ranjit Singh recognised the qualities of his head and heart and made an early alliance with him. The two chiefs swore perpetual friendship on Guru Granth Sahib and exchanged turbans which according to the orthodox usage formed a sign and tie of brotherhood.

Fateh Singh rendered tremendous help to Maharaja Ranjit Singh in his conquests and after a strenuous career of warfare on behalf of the Maharaja, he reigned peacefully during the last sixteen or seventeen years of his life in Kapurthala where he died in 1857. He was succeeded by his son Nihal Singh. The descendants of Nihal Singh ruled the Kapurthala state for more than a century till it was integrated with the Patiala and East Punjab States union in A.D. 1949. Now it forms a district of the Punjab State.

## **II. Dallewalia Misl**

The Misl was founded by Gulaba Khatri, son of Shardha Ram of village Dallewal also called Bora near Dera Baba Nanak on the eastern bank of the Ravi river 50 kms north-west of Amritsar. He started his life as a petty shopkeeper selling groceries. It so happened that her shop was plundered and when he complained to the authorities, he met blathering callousness. At this he decided

to join the people struggling for establishing a society based on justice, honest creative labour and considerations of human courtesies. He waited upon Kapur Singh and offered himself to serve him. He was advised by him to have baptism of double-edged sword so that a feeling of commitment to the cause of Khalsa ideology became an integral part of his psyche.

Shortly after, he appeared before Kapur Singh, along with his companions whom he had gathered round himself. His demeanour looked pervasive and his psyche chiselled. He had imbibed himself with the gospel of the Guru and seemed ready to be the 'Khalsa' of the Guru. He beseeched Kapur Singh to initiate him to the fraternity of the Khalsa. Kapur Singh administered him the baptism of the double-edged sword. This happened on the occasion of the Diwali in the compound opposite Sri Akal Takhat Sahib. He thereafter threw himself heart and soul into the struggle of the Khalsa.

In 1739, his band was among those who relieved Nadir Shah of his booty comprising a lot of wealth, a large number of horses and beautiful damsels et al. It was at his suggestion that a fort at Dallewal was built which later on was destroyed by Zakariya Khan.

He also took part in Chhota Ghallughara. Dayal Singh, his brother and Hardial Singh, his son were drowned in river Ravi while they jumped into it to monitor the depth of the water. His another son Jaipal Singh was killed while fighting and his other brother Gurdial Singh could save his life with great difficulty.

He also took part in the meeting of the Sarbat Khalsa that took the decision to organise Dal Khalsa. His Misl was specially deputed along with the Nishanwalia Misl at Amritsar to protect the holy city and to serve as a reserve force. After the battle of Panipat in 1757, when the victorious Durrani was returning along with a huge plunder, he had to suffer nocturnal attacks at his hands. At the fords on Ravi and Chenab, Gulab Singh with several other Sikh Sardars captured a large number of Afghan horses.

According to Dr. H.R. Gupta, Gulab Singh commanded a Jatha of 400 men. He plundered Hissar, Rohtak and Panipat. He also plundered Saharanpur and Jawalapur. He in conjunction with Karor Singhia Misl attacked Hardwar from where he crossed over to the Ganges into Rohil Khand.

Sardar Gulab Singh met a hero's death while fighting in 1759 against Ambo Khan of Kalanaur, near Gurdaspur.

*Tara Singh Ghaiba (1710—1807)*

After Gulab Singh's death, Tara Singh Ghaiba assumed the leadership of the Misl. It is said that he lived for about one hundred years. Dr. H.R. Gupta computed that he was born in 1710 and died in 1807. A resident of village Kang, 6 kms south of Lohian on the eastern side of Bein stream on the road leading to Nakodar, a goat-herd by profession, an event took place in his life, which entirely changed the course of his life. His one hundred goats were snatched by a notorious Gujjar dare-devil, Sulaiman. He could not retrieve even though he employed all his wit and wisdom. Totally broken, he left his village and began to search new avenues for livelihood and for security. At this critical juncture he entered the Khalsa fraternity which, in his reckoning, was the only one to give security coupled with individual liberty.

Physically he was very sturdy and had a rare capacity for innovation about which many stories were afloat. One of the most quoted feats illustrating this trait of his was that he used to pass his flock over the swollen Bein by means of ropes and for this people called him 'Ghaiba'—one who could adopt mysterious devices.

In the beginning of 1757, a foraging party of Ahmad Shah Abdali caught hold of him. Mistaking him a man of the area asked him where and how they could cross the stream along with their horses laden with a huge plunder. Tara Singh told them that the stream could be crossed on horse-back only. They gave him a horse and asked him to show the way by actually crossing it. Ghaiba rode the horse and jumped into the stream and crossed it, only to gallop it off into the jungle. At the end of March 1757, two years before he actually assumed the leadership of the Misl, he in company with Karora Singh dashed to the river Chenab where Timur Shah had taken the treasure which Ahmad Shah Abdali had plundered at Delhi to carry it to Kabul. They having covered 50 kms in one day reached the destination. After resting for a while they gulped down their throats parched grains and very silently and secretly attacked the Afghan guards. Before the Afghan main contingent could operate, they cut down the guards, broke open the boxes and made away with coins, gold and other precious metals. They reached Sri Hari Mandir Sahib to offer their obeisance to Sri Akal Takhat Sahib.

This feat of Tara Singh Ghaiba was a shot in his arm and



he began to be esteemed both by the people of his Misl and the people in general who found in him another leader to steer them clear of the insecure and vicious atmosphere.

A year after his assumption of the leadership of the Misl, Tara Singh seized parganahs of Dharamkot and Fatehgarh lying to the south of the Sutlej. He gave Fatehgarh to his cousins, Dharam Singh and Kaur Singh of village Kang. He snatched Dakni from Saif-ud-Din Afghan in the Jullundur Doab. He also captured Rahon which he made as his seat of government. He occupied Nawan Shahar Doaba. He ousted Munj Rajputs from Nakodar. Besides, he occupied villages in large numbers situated along the right bank of the Sutlej including Mahatpur and Kot Badal Khan.

In March 1763, he was on his way to Anandpur Sahib to pay his offerings and prayers at Sri Kesgarh. In the vicinity of Morinda, he came across a convoy carrying valuables and chests filled with coins. He attacked it and relieved it of its precious baggage. In 1763, he took an active part in the expedition led by Sardar Hari Singh Bhangi to retrieve the wife of a Brahmin of Kasur whom Usman Khan of Kasur had forcibly taken to his Harem. He obtained cash and jewellery worth four lakhs of rupees.

When Sirhind fell in January 1764, he acquired Ramanwala and Mari in Moga tehsil. At both these places, he built forts. Ghungrana was also taken possession of.

Tara Singh's activities went even beyond the frontiers of Punjab. He participated in many of the campaigns in the Gangetic Doab, Rohil Khand and Delhi. In 1775, three Sikh Sardars, Rai Singh Bhangi of Buriya, Tara Singh Ghaiba and Baghel Singh Karorsinghia gathered near Karnal. On 22nd April 1775 they crossed the Jamuna at Begi Ghat. Zabita Khan son of Najib-ud-Daula Rohilla shut himself up in the fort of Ghausgarh, 30 kms north-west of Muzaffarnagar. Ultimately Zabita Khan had to pay a sum of Rs. 50,000. It was about the same time they received a tribute of sixty thousand rupees from Turkoman families of Lakhnaite and Gango. The faujdar of Ambheta was also made to pay two thousand rupees. Deoband was made to pay 'Rakhi' to Rae Singh Bhangi.

After that, they turned to Delhi. Enroute, they plundered the villages of Bara Sadat, Shamli, Kairana, Kandhla and Meerut.

At Kutana Ghat, they crossed the Jamuna and advanced towards Delhi and set fire to quite a number of buildings of the ruling elite.

March, 1783 brought Tara Singh more laurels, both as a general and a religious zealot. He was with other Sikhs in Delhi. He brought two guns from the Red Fort and kept them at Rahon. He helped Baghel Singh in constructing seven Gurdwaras at Delhi.

Tara Singh maintained cordial relations with the Raja of Patiala. In 1765, he helped Amar Singh in suppressing the rebellion of Prince Himmat Singh who claimed the crown for himself. It was because of him that Amar Singh was able to repel the attack of Hari Singh Dallewalia of Sialba and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia.

In 1779, Abdul Ahad Khan moved his camp towards Patiala to bring him into submission and to extract a lot of money from him to bolster up the withering finances of the Mughal Empire. The Raja of Patiala offered him a lot of money to buy peace, but Ahad Khan raised his demand to thirty lakhs which Nanu Mal, the Wakil of the Raja, declined to comply with. Thereupon Abdul Ahad Khan reached Pehowa on 23rd September, 1774. Tara Singh Ghaiba reached Patiala at the head of 15,000 troops. The combined forces of Tara Singh and Raja Amar Singh fought a well contested battle on 7th October, 1779 but they were defeated by the Imperialists. Amar Singh and Tara Singh shut themselves up in the fort at Patiala. They were hardpressed. At this juncture, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia at the head of Dal Khalsa numbering 2 lakhs started making rapid marches to help Amar Singh. The Nawab got frightened and was constrained to raise the siege and retreat receiving nothing from the ruler of Patiala. The strategy to invite the Dal Khalsa was conceived and executed by Tara Singh for which the ruler of Patiala admired him the most.

From February to June 1781, another Imperial general Shafi Khan carried a campaign against the cis-Sutlej Sardars. Raja Amar Singh sent his Wakil Chain Singh to offer his services. As a sequel to it, the Raja despatched his forces to conjoin with Shafi's forces. Near Ambala, his forces were intercepted and were allowed to proceed further to help Shafi. This was done by Tara Singh with two purposes—firstly, he did not want Raja Amar Singh to play a traitor to the Sikh brethren and, secondly he did not want Shafi to succeed in his design of ousting, humiliating or plundering the territories of Sikh chieftains of cis-Sutlej states. Not only this, he mollified Jassa Singh Ahluwalia who had marched at the head of Dal Khalsa to assist cis-Sutlej Sardars, and, to his dismay, found Raja Amar Singh in the camp of Shafi. The Wakil of Amar Singh offered a heavy amount to Sardar Jassa Singh and other Sardars

who acted as his accomplices.

The year 1784 was also significant so far as relationship between Raja Amar Singh and Tara Singh Ghaiba were concerned. In December, Mahadji Sindhia who was appointed by Emperor Shah Alam II regent of the Mughal empire, was hardpressed on account of acute shortage of money. He deputed Rane Khan at the head of a strong force to collect tribute from the cis-Sutlej Sikh chiefs. Baghel Singh invited Trans-Sutlej Sardars for assistance. Before they could come, Raja Amar Singh through his Vakil Nanu Mal offered four lakhs of rupees as annual tribute and two lakhs of rupees for expenses of the army. Rane Khan demanded eight lakhs in all. Nanu Mal agreed to pay provided he agreed to drive 12000 Sikhs of Trans-Sutlej who had encamped in the Patiala boundary. Rane Khan agreed to begin with, but then he changed his mind. He in order to get still more money marched to attack Patiala. Tara Singh Ghaiba opposed him, on April 15, 1789. About 250 men were killed and wounded on both sides. Rane Khan had to make peace when he came to know that other Sikh forces from across the border were coming.

Tara Singh also supported the Raja of Patiala against George Thomas in 1799.

Tara Singh's life-style was that of a true Sikh because of his high principles, his love and affection for everyone and his kind disposition. He was able to convert a large number of people under the impact of his pleasing personality. Chaudhari Guru Hardas of Kang village embraced Sikh religion. Later his example was followed by the people of Kang Kalan and Kang Khurd who became zealous Sikhs.

He took simple diet, wore Kachha or half trousers, put on simple dress made of home-spun coarse cloth, wore shoes made of simple leather. He was unostentatious in his manners and humorous in his disposition. Simplicity and humility were hall-marks of his personality. Un-like many other Sardars, his dress was that of a commoner. He never wore Doshala (a precious shawl) rather he felt comfortable in Dhusa (a rough blanket) understandably to conform to the life-style of his comrades which they adopted during their life of grim struggle against the Mughals as well as the Afghans.

Refined by Sikh religion, as he was, he tried to live the ideas of the Sikh Gurus regarding polity. He, therefore, never lost sight of delivering justice and alleviating the difficulties of the people.

Bute Shah has recorded many events high-lighting the aforesaid traits of Tara Singh. If he came across a peasant barefooted and clothed shabbily, he would sit with him and would not leave him till he could get information regarding his plight. On coming to know that he was in some difficulty, he would at once arrange for its alleviation. Satisfaction of his subjects was his top priority. According to Giani Gian Singh, he had opened langars (free kitchens) in all the villages under him for the poor and the needy. He was respected by all the Sardars including Ranjit Singh who called him 'Babaji'.

He was lenient in levying and collecting revenue. The Zamindars were supposed to give one-fourth or one-fifth of their produce as state share, but the peasantry, in general gave one-tenth of the produce. Mahajans and craftsmen also felt extremely comfortable, absolutely free from fear with the result that they prospered.<sup>1</sup>

Tara Singh distributed his territory, among his four sons. Dasondha Singh had Dakhni, Gujjar Singh possessed parganas of Ghungrana and Baddowal, Nakodar and Mahilpur fell into the share of Jhanda Singh. The youngest son remained with him at Rahon.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh in his bid to establish his influence or rule led his first expedition into the cis-Sutlej country. He expelled Gujjar Singh from his territory which he distributed among Bhag Singh of Jind, Karam Singh of Nagla, Gurdit Singh of Ladwa and Raja Jaswant Singh of Nabha. A couple of villages worth 5000 were left with Gujjar Singh.

Finding ascending ambition of Ranjit Singh, Tara Singh Ghaiba tried to conciliate him and as a token of that he accompanied him to take part in the conquest of Naraingarh in 1807. Tara Singh got wounded in the battle and he died on his way back before reaching Rahon.

The Maharaja went straight to Rahon, for mourning but only outwardly; his real aim was to occupy Rahon. The widow Rattan Kaur could gauge his real motive, and to appease Ranjit Singh, she gave him six lakhs of rupees, one elephant and five horses fully caparisoned. Ranjit Singh did not feel satisfied and he eye-signalled to Diwan Mohkam Chand to attack. Rattan Kaur, zealously supported by his soldiers and respiting subjects, put up

1. Bute Shah, *Tarikh-i-Punjab*, Dafter IV Ms. Dr. Ganda Singh's personal collection, Patiala, p. 78.

stout defence. But Qiladar (incharge of the fort) had already been won over. The inevitable happened. The fort was captured. Rattan Kaur with her youngest son fled across Sutlej in extreme poverty. Maharaja Ranjit Singh took possession of 35 lakhs of rupees in cash, large quantity of gold and jewellery and other valuables.

This was followed by the annexation of Dasondha Singh's territory which Ranjit Singh handed over to Sahib Singh Bedi of Una. Likewise, the territories of Jhanda Singh were taken possession of by the Maharaja. Dasondha Singh and Jhanda Singh (both sons of Tara Singh) held territories in Jullundur Doab. Gujjar Singh had already been dispossessed.

In this way the family of Tara Singh Ghaiba was ruined (Khandani Ra-Barbad Kard). Thus the Dallewalia Misl met its end. Some of its Sardars in the cis-Sutlej region continued to exist as individuals.

The territories of the Misl were situated in the Jullundur Doab as well as in Ludhiana, Ambala and Karnal districts. A few estates were also situated in Ferozepur district. The headquarter of this Misl was at Rahon. Region wise, the details of the territories of this misl were as under :

#### *Jullundur Doab*

Bundala, Dakhni Sarae, Garhdiwala, Garhshankar, Haibatpur, Kang, Lohian, Mahtabpur, Nakodar, Nawan Shahar, Phillaur, Rahon, Talwan, Takhatgarh.

#### *Cis-Sutlej Region*

Akalgarh, Amloh, Arnauli, Awankot, Bahrapur, Bangar, Barara, Berian, Chanderi, Dera, Dharamkot, Dharam Singh wala, Dhandowal, Fatehgarh, Ghungrana, Indri, Kohad, Kaithal, Kakrala, Khairabad, Khmanon, Kheri, Khizrabad, Korali, Kalkar Kharyal, Machholi, Mari, Mustafabad, Nurpur, Pundri, Ramuwala, Ropar, Sahadat, Saron, Shahkot, Sialba, Sikandra, Sindhuwal, Siswan, Tandwal, Tihara, Wadni.<sup>1</sup>

### **III. Faizulpuria or Singhpuria Misl**

The Misl was founded by the famous Nawab Kapur Singh, a Jat Zamindar. He wrested a village named Faizulpur, near

1. The information has been collected from Ali-ud-Din Mufti's work and Dr. H.R. Gupta's book *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. IV.

Amritsar from its Muhammadan founder, Fyzullah and renamed it Singhpur, whence Misl was given the name, Singhpuria, though it was frequently called Faizulpuria, after the original name of the village.

Nawab Kapur Singh was born of a Virk family of Jats in A.D. 1697, two years before the creation of the Khalsa. His native village was Kalo-ke in Sheikhpura district (now in Pakistan). Later on when he seized the village Faizulpur, he started living there. He was nearly eleven years old at the time of Guru Gobind Singh's demise and nineteen at the time of the execution of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur. He had thus passed his early life in an atmosphere charged with the religious fervour. He came into living touch with the new impulse then directing the energies of his people when he took baptism from Bhai Mani Singh at a large gathering of Sikhs at Amritsar on the occasion of the Diwali. His father, Dalip Singh, and brother Dan Singh, were also among those who were initiated into the fold of the Khalsa on that historic day.

Kapur Singh, because of his warlike spirit, high statesmanship and keen sense of perception and ability to fashion suitable responses to the circumstances, soon gained a position of eminence among his people who were then engaged in life and death struggle against the Mughal Government. The Mughal Government in the Punjab, first under the governorship of Samad Khan and then under that of Zakariya Khan launched a policy of repression of the Sikhs and let loose terror upon them. Kapur Singh, during this dark period, headed a band of warriors who, with a view to paralyzing the administration, attacked the government treasuries and caravans moving from one place to another. Such was the effect of their depredations that the Subedar was soon obliged to make terms with them.

In 1733, Zakariya Khan decided to abandon the policy of repression of the Sikhs and made an offer of a grant to them. Subeg Singh, a Sikh resident of village Jambar, near Lahore, who was for some time Kotwal of the city of Lahore under Muslim authority, was entrusted the task of negotiation with the Khalsa. He reached Amritsar where the Sikhs had assembled to celebrate the festival of Baisakhi after many years of exile, and offered them on behalf of the government the title of Nawab and a Jagir consisting of the parganas of Dipalpur, Kanganwal and Jhabal.

After some mutual discussion, the Sikhs accepted the offer. The Khalsa commonwealth reared from the beginning on a



democratic principle was now faced with the question of choosing a fit person to be invested with the title of Nawab. All eyes centered on Kapur Singh who was, with one accord, selected for the honour. He, at that time, was stirring the air over the assembly with a hand fan to soften the rigours of a hot day.

Kapur Singh was reluctant, but he could not deny the unanimous will of the Panth. As a mark of respect, he placed the robe of honour sent by the Mughals at the feet of five dedicated Sikhs—Bhai Hari Singh Hazuri, Baba Deep Singh Shaheed, Sardar Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, Bhai Karam Singh and Sardar Budh Singh, great grand-father of Maharaja Ranjit Singh—before putting it on. It was really something praiseworthy that in spite of so much honour which he commanded, he lost none of his native humility or simplicity of heart. The first request he made to his comrades after the investiture was that he should not be deprived of his old privilege of serving in the community kitchen.

Immediately after this, Kapur Singh undertook to consolidate the disintegrated fabric of the Sikh organisation. The whole body of the Khialsa was formed into two sections—The Buddha Dal, the army of veterans and Taruna Dal, the army of the youthful.

The Taruna Dal rapidly grew in strength and soon numbered more than 12,000. To ensure efficient functioning, Nawab Kapur Singh split it into five parts, each with a separate centre. The first batch was led by Baba Deep Singh Shaheed, the second by Karam Singh and Dharam Singh, the third by Kahan Singh and Binod Singh of Goindwal, the fourth by Dasondha Singh of Kot Buddha and the fifth by Vir Singh and Jivan Singh Ranghretas. Each batch had its own banner and drum, and formed the nucleus of a separate political state.

The entente with the Mughals did not last long, and before the harvest of 1735, Zakariya Khan the Subedar of Lahore, sent a force and occupied the Jagir. The Sikhs were driven away towards the Malwa by Lakhpat Rai, the Diwan of Lahore. The major reason for the breakdown of entente was that the Sikhs were not willing to toe the line of the Mughal rulers.

During this sojourn in the Malwa, Nawab Kapur Singh continued his missionary and military activities in the cis-Sutlej parts. Ala Singh, the leader of Phulkian Misl and Hamir Singh ancestor of the Faridkot royal family, were prominent among those who took baptism from him. Nawab Kapur Singh conquered the territory of Sunam and made it over to Ala Singh. He also attacked Sirhind and defeated the

Mughal governor of the place in a fierce action.

The Nawab led the bulk of the Sikhs to the Majha to celebrate Diwali at Amritsar. But he was defeated by Diwan Lakhpat Rai's army near Amritsar and forced to turn away. The Taruna Dal promptly came to his help. The combined forces fell upon Diwan Lakhpat Rai before he had reached Lahore and inflicted upon him a severe defeat. The Diwan's nephew Duni Chand and two important Mughal faujdars, Jamal Khan and Tatar Khan were killed in this battle.

The Mughal government pursued the policy of persecution with greater vigour and thoroughness. To cut off the Sikhs from the chief source of their inspiration, the temple of Amritsar was taken possession of and military contingents were positioned to prevent the Sikhs from visiting it. The daring among the Sikhs, just to assert their right of ablution in the holy tank at Amritsar, riding on their horses either in disguise or openly cutting their way through the army guards, would reach the temple and after taking a dip in the tank, ride back with lightning speed.

The Mughal Government did not relent in its policy even in the face of all this, rather Massa Ranghar, the Muslim chieftain of Amritsar, occupied the Amritsar temple and converted it into a dancing hall. Mehtab Singh and Sukha Singh reacted violently to this act of sacrilege of Massa and killed him.

The Subedar of Lahore, Zakariya Khan, sent a strong force under Samad Khan to drive out the Sikhs. Samad Khan was killed in action by the Sikhs under the command of the Nawab who were passionately looking forward to the opportunity to kill him to take revenge of the death of Bhai Mani Singh because it was he who was responsible for killing Bhai with torture.

Kapur Singh now made a plan to capture Zakariya Khan with a force 2000 strong, dressed in green, their hair hanging loosely behind in Muslim style and a green Muslim banner leading them. He entered the city and went on to the Shahi Mosque, where according to the intelligence received, the Mughal governor was expected to attend the afternoon prayers. But Zakariya Khan did not visit the mosque and Nawab Kapur Singh had to return disappointed. While returning, Kapur Singh and the Sikh soldiers threw off their disguise and shouting their usual war-cries of Sat Sri Akal marched out of Lahore.

The Buddha Dal once again crossed the Sutlej and marched right upto the vicinity of Delhi. On the way, they triumphed over

the chieftains of Jhajjar, Dojana and Pataudi and received tribute from them. After over-running Faridabad, Ballabgarh and Gurgaon, the Dal returned to the Malwa.

In the early months of A.D. 1739, Nadir Shah was returning home. The Dal Khalsa under the direction of Nawab Kapur Singh swooped down upon the rearguard, relieving the invaders of much of their booty. They also rescued from the invaders a large number of Hindu girls who were restored to their families.

Kapur Singh took full advantage of the confusion that had been caused by Nadir Shah's invasion. He punished all those who spied on the activities of the Sikhs. He also inspired the Sikhs to build a fort at village Dallewal. Another notable work that he did was that he organised the Sikhs into twenty-five bands, each under the command of one leader. These bands were united by Khalsa ideology as well as by common interests.

After the return of Nadir Shah, Yahiya Khan, the Mughal governor of Lahore, and his minister Lakhpat Rai launched an all-out campaign and set forthwith a large army. So indiscriminate and so extensive was the killing that the event in Sikh history is known as the first Ghallughara or first Holocaust. During this period, Kapur Singh's guidance and leadership did not allow the spirit of the Sikhs to droop or dampen.

In 1748, a section of the Dal Khalsa, under Charat Singh, grand-father of Ranjit Singh, gave chase to the fleeing troops of Ahmad Shah Abdali, while another at the instance of Nawab Kapur Singh decided to march towards Amritsar.

On March 29, 1748 on the Baisakhi Day, the Sarbat Khalsa gathered at Amritsar. Kapur Singh made a call for still more cohesion among the Khalsa. The Khalsa made a positive response and all the bands of the Sikhs whose number had increased to sixty-five leagued themselves into eleven Misls. The division of the Dal Khalsa into Taruna Dal and Buddha Dal was retained. Ahluwalia, Dallewalia, Faizulpuria, Karorsinghia, Nishanwalia and Shaheed Misls formed Buddha Dal while Taruna Dal was constituted by Bhangi, Kanhiya, Nakai, Ramgarhia and Sukarchakia Misls. Kapur Singh begged the Khalsa with folded hands to be relieved of his office, and at his suggestion Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was chosen the supreme commander of the Dal Khalsa.

In course of time, Kapur Singh took possession of several villages situated on both sides of river Sutlej. In the parganas of Fatehpur, Haibatpur and Patti worth two lakhs of rupees a year.

Khushwaqt Rai records that Ala Singh of Patiala, Rai Ahmad of Jagraon and Jassa Singh Ahluwalia paid him a certain share out of their revenues as a mark of respect for him. He commanded a force of 2500 horsemen. The force though small was the fiercest and most dreaded of all the Sikh soldiers as Muhammad Latif would have us believe.

Nawab Kapur Singh died in 1753 at Amritsar and his body was consigned to flames near the monument raised in honour of Baba Atal. He bequeathed the honours which he enjoyed among the Khalsa to the Ahluwalia Sardar. He called Jassa Singh Ahluwalia to his death-bed and handed over to him the steel mace of Guru Gobind Singh (now placed at Akal Takhat), thereby hailing him as his successor to the influence which he exercised over the Sikhs.

Nawab Kapur Singh's place in the history of the Punjab as well as of the Sikhs is very high. After Banda Singh Bahadur, it was he who organised the first regular Sikh army, called the Dal Khalsa, and it was his courage, earnestness and steadfastness which inspired the Sikh leaders to carve out principalities for themselves. No wonder, after him the Sikh states rose like mushrooms all over the Punjab.

He was responsible not only in keeping up the morale of the Sikhs against very heavy odds and in unequal fights, but also he upheld the idea of establishing the sovereign rule committed to the ideals of Sikhism, which had received serious setback with the fall of Banda Singh, and was likely to vanish into oblivion, had it not been caressed, championed and substantiated by corresponding deeds.

He was also keen to spread the mission of the Guru. In this context, he extended all possible help to Bhai Mani Singh to expound Sikhism and preach it in its right form. He himself did not lose any opportunity of administering 'Pahul' to the deserving Sikhs. He converted a large number of people, Jats, Carpenters, Weavers, Jhiwars, Chatries and others to Sikhism, and the respect in which he was held, was so great that to receive 'Pahul' from his hands, was considered a great distinction. He took pride in Sikh institutions especially Guru Ka Langar. He believed that Deg was precursor of 'Tegh'. His slogan was that in Guru Ghar there always was Deg for friends and Tegh for enemies.

Besides this, his personal character was above reproach. In the midst of his life-long pre-occupation with fighting, he maintained an irreproachable ethical standard. He was renowned

for his generosity, humility and spirit of sacrifice. Regarding his generosity, many stories became current. A Mirasi said that if he were a real philanthropist he should bestow on him so much wealth that he could not carry it. The Nawab granted him a well and a big tract of land.

Nawab Kapur Singh paved the way for the Sikh nation to emerge as an independent ruling power. He gave right type of leadership to the Sikhs when they were face to face with the most trying and the most difficult times and for about a quarter of a century, it was mainly he who led the Sikhs successfully against the heaviest of odds. It was at his instance and guidance that Taruna and Buddha Dals were organised and later in 1748, Dal Khalsa was established. Knitting the Sikhs in an organisation was the task which was at once remarkable and spoke very high of his organising ability and administrative vision.

He held his territory on the east and the west of Sutlej. He died in October 1753 at Amritsar and his body was consigned to flames near the monument raised in honour of Baba Atal. He called Jassa Singh Ahluwalia to his death-bed and handed over to him the steel mace of Guru Gobind Singh, now placed at Akal Takhat, thereby hailing him as his successor to the influence which he exercised over the community of the Sikhs.

### *Khushal Singh*

Kapur Singh had no issue of his own and after his death was succeeded by his nephew, Khushal Singh who equalled his uncle in wisdom and bravery and extended his kingdom on both sides of the Sutlej. He added to his patrimony a number of places and parganas such as Behrampur, Nurpur and Khaparkheri. In 1759, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Khushal Singh attacked Bishambar Mal, the Diwan of late Adina Beg, and captured MhangaIwal, Jullundur and Ramra. Sardar Ahluwalia allowed him to make Jullundur his capital where he stationed 750 horse and 250 foot under Mahan Singh. He captured parganas of Haibatpur and Patti from the Pathan chiefs of Kasur. In January 1764, at the conquest of Sirhind, he acquired Bharatgarh, Bhareli, Chune Machhli, Ghanali, Jhunga, Kandaulah and Manauli, worth one and a half lakh rupees.

He joined almost all the campaigns of Dal Khalsa. In 1766, Ahmad Shah Abdali was at Lahore. With a view to harassing him, the Sikh Sardars had taken up positions at various places around



Lahore. Khushal Singh and Tara Singh Ghaiba stationed their forces at Taragarh about 30 kms from the Durrani camp. On 15th January, 1767, Ahmad Shah was at Kot Nur-ud-Din. He wrote letters to Khushal Singh and other Sardars either to submit or accept Jagirs from him. This thing testifies to the lofty position of the Sardar.

Khushal Singh in conjunction with Raja Amar Singh forced the Nawab of Raikot to surrender Chhat and Banur to them. Both these places continued to be ruled by both the Sardars for quite some time but then by a mutual settlement Chhat was taken over by Khushal Singh and Banur by Amar Singh.

Hari Singh of Ropar seized ten villages of Khushal Singh which he recovered through battle which he fought along with Rajas of Bilaspur and Nalagarh state whose territories had also been captured by Hari Singh.

Like his illustrious predecessor, he made a large number of converts. He possessed undaunted courage and a cavalryman who shot dead Nawab Zain Khan the Muhammadan Subedar of Sirhind in 1764, was one of his own followers.

### *Budh Singh*

Khushal Singh died in 1795 and was succeeded by his own son Budh Singh. He was a devoted Sikh like his father. Nur-ud-Din, the officer at Tarn Taran, had removed the bricks from the holy tank of Tarn Taran and made use of them in the construction of his house. Budh Singh demolished his house and brought back the bricks to be used in the repair of the tank. He spent a huge sum amounting to one lakh rupees in renovation and repairing of the Gurdwara and its adjoining tank. At Jullundur he built a massive fort on whose site, Qila Mohalla came into being later on.

In 1804, all his possessions in Bari Doab were acquired by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. To save his movable property and cash, he joined the service of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. During his cis-Sutlej campaign, Maharaja bestowed on him the pargana of Awankot, yielding an income of Rs. 54,000 a year. Another member of his Misl Garbha Singh received Bharatgarh fetching revenues to the tune of Rs. 53,200.

In 1814, he smelt that Maharaja Ranjit Singh had made up his mind to take possession of his territories in Jullundur Doab. He thought it politically sagacious to seek the protection of the



British. He therefore fled away to Ludhiana in the British territory to the delight of the Maharaja who escaped the trouble resorting to some stratagem to achieve his aim. The Maharaja appointed Nur-ud-Din, brother of Faqir Aziz-ud-Din, the governor of Jullundur Doab. The whole movable property and all the territories of Budh Singh situated to the west of river Sutlej were confiscated. Thus came the end of Singhpuria or Faizulpuria Misl.

Budh Singh's possession in cis-Sutlej region lay from near Kiratpur to Machhiwara. He established his headquarter at Manauli. He died in 1816 A.D.

Regionwise break-up of the territories of the Misl when it was at the zenith of its power is as under :

#### *Cis-Sutlej Region*

Akalgarh, Awankot, Bahrapur, Bharatgarh, Bhareli, Binewal, Ghanauli, Janoli, Kandhanwala, Lamra, Machholi, Manauli.

#### *Doaba Bari*

Faizulpur, Haibatpur, Patti, Khaparkheri. The headquarter of the Misl was at Faizulpur and later at Jullundur.

### **IV. Karor Singhia Misl**

The Misl is also called Panjgrahia, the name derived from the village of the same name which was native place of their first chief, Karori Mal, a Jat who after receiving 'Pahul' changed his name to Karor Singh. He along with his companions Mastan Singh and Karam Singh founded the Misl. At the time of the formation of Dal Khalsa, Karor Singh was the acknowledged leader of the Misl.

#### *Karor Singh*

The field of Karor Singh's activity was the area lying south of the Kangra hills in Hoshiarpur district because, in his reckoning this area could afford him hide-outs in emergency. He seized Hoshiarpur, Hariana, Sham Chaurasi (84 villages), all the four basis, Shamsabad, Ban Beli, Bahadurpur and the Talwan territory extending from Ghorewala in the east to Shahkot in the west. The river Bein and Ghurka were its northern limits while the river Sutlej formed its southern limit. The Talwan territory was held by Mahmud Khan, a Munj Rajput who thought it advisable to seek protection of Karor Singh, because otherwise he was sure to be

dispossessed by some other Sardars, especially of Ahluwalia and Dallewalia Misls whose territories bordered his own.

### *Baghel Singh*

Karor Singh had no issue, and consequently he was succeeded by Baghel Singh, who had been adopted by Karor Singh, in spite of his being his personal servant. A native of the village Jhabhal, he belonged to a family of Dhaliwal Jats which had scanty means to live upon. As he grew to youth-hood, he joined the Jatha of Karor Singh. Soon he won over the heart of his master because of his daring and love for the cause of the Khalsa. Karor Singh took him on his personal staff and soon adopted him as his heir. After assuming the headship of the Misl, he carved out for himself a unique position among the Misl chieftains. In the cis-Sutlej region, his role had been dominant in Sikh politics, especially in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The Imperialist Mughals as also the British regarded him a power to be always considered while settling issues regarding the destiny of the decadent Mughal empire. He had the capacity and capability to play a major role in building up the political power of the Sikhs over the whole of northern India, and no wonder, his moves in this context were significant. His dedication to his religion was unbounded and whenever he found a chance he never faltered to help his co-religionists. He built seven Gurdwaras at Delhi including Sis Ganj and Rakab Ganj.

After the death of Adina Beg Khan in September 1758, and during Ahmad Shah Abdali's invasion against the Marathas in 1759-61, the Sikh Sardars engaged themselves in acquiring lands. Baghel Singh also obtained possession of a large segment of Hoshiarpur district and nearly one-fourth of Jullundur Doab. In 1764, Baghel Singh occupied Chhalondi, Jamaitgarh, Khurdian and Minori. In 1775, Baghel Singh acquired Zahura on the river Beas. In 1792, he ousted Bhangi Sardar from three parganas of Tam Tarar, Sobraon and Sirhali. Gulab Singh Bhangi having failed against Baghel Singh in the field, hired a Brahmin to kill him through tantrics, only to face disappointment which it has always been in the case of all those who wish to build their fortune on whims. He ruled his estates from three headquarters, Hariana, Chhalondi and Kalawar and administration was conducted respectively by his three intelligent wives, Rup Kaur, Ram Kaur and Rattan Kaur, while

Baghel Singh, kept himself engaged in outside activities.

### *Baghel Singh in the Gangetic Doab*

Baghel Singh's activities in Ganga Doab were very special. After the conquest of Sirhind province, Buddha Dal in a body of 40000 strong entered the upper Ganga Doab. Baghel Singh was one of the most prominent leaders including Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. The tract of Saharanpur including its headquarter, the city of Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar and Mirah were ravaged. Najib-ud-Daula, the dictator of Delhi from 1761 to 1770, had to buy peace by paying eleven lakhs of rupees to the Sikhs. All this happened just after 1764.

When the Sikhs started incursions into Doab in April 1775, Baghel Singh took active part. He led one of the two divisions of the Sikhs, the other division was led by Tara Singh Ghaiba and Sham Singh Bhangi of Buryia. The Sikhs pillaged Lakhnauti, Gangoh, Ambehta, Nanauta and Deoband. Zabita Khan saved his capital Ghausgarh by flattery and bribe of Rs. 50,000. Similarly, Barah Sadat villages, Shamli, Kairana, Kandhla and Meerut were squeezed. During these campaigns Zabita Khan had to accompany them.

On their return, they destroyed Pahar Ganj and Jai Singh pura at Delhi. They reached home in July 1775. On March 11, 1776, he along with other Sikh leaders raided Meerut district. The Imperial commander Abdul Qasim, the brother of deputy Prime Minister Abdul Ahad Khan was killed while fighting against them at Amir Nagar, 13 kms west of Muzaffarnagar.

Abdul Ahad Khan in June 1779 led an expedition against the cis-Sutlej chiefs to realise tribute. He was accompanied by Prince Mirza Jahan Shah Farrukhanda Bakht, the second son of Shah Alam second. At Karnal many Sikh chiefs joined the Mughal camp. Among them was also Baghel Singh. Abdul Ahad Khan often consulted the Sardar because of his high status. It was at his promptings that Abdul Ahad Khan realised a very large sum as a tribute from Gajpat Singh, the ruler of Jind state because he bore hostility toward the latter. It was again on his goading that the Nawab forced Desu Singh, the ruler of Kaithal, to pay a huge sum of four lakhs of rupees—three lakhs to be possessed by the Nawab and one lakh to be shared by Baghel Singh and other Sardars.

*Abdul Ahad's campaign (1779)*

Abdul Ahad Khan, the deputy prime minister of the Mughal empire, now planned to proceed to Patiala to put pressure on its ruler, Amar Singh, to spare a lot of money for the emperor. He reached Ghuram 25 kms south of Patiala. In spite of military threat, Amar Singh remained adamant and did not attend upon the Nawab. Abdul Ahad Khan laid waste the city of Patiala and besieged its fort. But he failed to storm the fort. At this juncture, Baghel Singh was inveigled by Nawab to go to the camp of Amar Singh to persuade him to pay tribute to him. He politely refused, and at the same time advised him to beat a retreat expeditiously as the trans-Sutlej Sikh chiefs had already reached Patiala territory with their mammoth forces to help Amar Singh. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Jai Singh, Haqiqat Singh, Trilok Singh, Amar Singh Bagga, Amar Singh Kangra, Sada Singh, Tara Singh Kakash, Mohar Singh Nishanwalia, his brother Anup Singh, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, Tara Singh Ghaiba, Jodh Singh of Wazirabad, Phulkian chiefs of Jind, Nabha, Bhadaur and Malaud were the important Sikh chieftains who had taken responsibility to save Amar Singh from the Mughal onslaught. The Nawab got frightened and asked Baghel Singh to do something to avert the clash between him and the Sikh chieftains.

Baghel Singh struck a master stroke. He had a talk with Sardars and prevailed upon the Nawab to pay 3 lakh rupees which he had realised from Desu Singh of Kaithal. Out of this sum, he kept for himself one lakh rupees. The Nawab retreated on 14th October and reached Panipat on 18th October. On his return march, he was frequently attacked by certain cis-Sutlej Sikh chiefs. Baghel Singh, however, did not join the loot, perhaps because he had already secured enough.

Baghel Singh has been maligned for deceiving the Nawab by some historians including Dr. H.R. Gupta, but such remarks are not fair, rather uncharitable. His action arose out of his feelings for his co-religionist and brother chieftains. It also marked the culmination of his inner conviction that if the Mughal rulers succeeded against one chieftain, they would be encouraged to subdue others also.

*Imbroglío in Cis-Sutlej States*

The year of 1780 was a bad year in the annals of the cis-Sutlej Sikh states because of internecine warfare among its rulers.

Baghel Singh and Dulcha Singh of Radaur were on one side, while on the other side were Diwan Singh of Sikandra, Bhanga Singh of Thanesar, Sahib Singh of Khondah and Najaf Khan on the other. Both sides suffered quite a large number of casualties in various skirmishes. No higher motive was involved in this mutual warfare; clash of ego was the only motivation.

Maharaja of Patiala acted very smartly. He took advantage of the squabbles of Sikh chieftains and seized a number of villages belonging to them. Baghel Singh also lost Bhuni, Lalru and Mullanpur.

Baghel Singh with some other Sardars decided to retaliate. Raja Amar Singh also was joined by Raja of Nahan and certain other Sardars. A battle took place at Ghuram. A contingent of Baghel Singh attacked Patiala city. When he realised that the fort Mubark could not be captured because of very powerful guns stationed on its ramparts, he withdrew and ravaged the countryside of Patiala state. Raja Amar Singh had to make peace by returning his captured villages. He deputed his Vakil Chain Singh to negotiate with Baghel Singh. He held the reins of his horse and humbly requested, "Sardar Singh Ji, please do not ruin a servant of Guru-ghar." Baghel Singh became sentimental and stopped ravaging the Patiala territory. The five year old son of Amar Singh, Sahib Singh came forward to pay respect to Baghel Singh who hugged him. Baghel Singh then administered him 'Pahul' and declared that henceforth he would always help him.

### *Mirza Shah's campaign against Cis-Sutlej Sikhs*

In 1781, the Imperialists sent a large force comprising 10,000 soldiers and a part of artillery under the command of Mirza Shafi, the grand nephew of Delhi Wazir Mirza Najaf Khan, to cis-Sutlej region to realise tribute and assert Mughal authority. Shafi moved to Radaur 43 kms north of Karnal and encamped there. He then advanced further and occupied Indri, 10 kms from Ladwa. The master of Indri, Baghel Singh and his Sikh allies fought but could not succeed, and suffered a loss of 150 men while Shafi lost only 30 men. In April 1781, Shafi realised a fine of Rs. 7000 from Indri. Baghel Singh made a clever move and without the full knowledge of Shafi attacked Shahbad. Khalil Beg who had occupied it had to face humiliation by surrendering with 300 horse, 800 foot and two pieces of canons. Khalil Beg was shot dead and Shafi Khan was forced to flee to Kunjpura.

*Bid to humiliate the Mughal Imperialists*

Almost two years after (i.e. to say in February 1783) Baghel Singh and Jassa Singh Ahluwalia marched towards Delhi. Their main purpose was that the crown lands of the Mughal Emperor as also those held by the Mughal nobility must be ravaged to make their owners realise that Sikhs were a power never to be touched by the Mughals or any other power including Marathas. They commenced their depredations at Ghaziabad. Then they plundered Bulandshahar and Khurja which was a famous market of grain and ghee. They came upon a lot of wealth at this place. According to Giani Gian Singh after possessing the wealth Baghel Singh and Jassa Singh spread a cloth, and asked the chiefs to give away one-tenth of their booty in cash for the service of the Guru. The sum thus collected amounted to one lakh of rupees. The money was spent on Hari Mandir Sahib at Amritsar.

After this, the Sikhs raided Aligarh, Hathras, Tundla, Shikohabad. The Nawab of Furrukhabad also had to submit, surrendering his valuables including pearls, diamonds, silver and gold. The city was thoroughly pillaged.

Large quantities of precious metals, diamond and pearls including Nawab's golden Huqqa and a stick studded with diamonds fell into Baghel Singh's hands.<sup>1</sup>

*Delhi under Sikh Domination*

Baghel Singh touched apogee of his already lustrous career. He along with Jassa Singh now reached Delhi. No opposition practically. Baghel Singh at the head of 30,000 Khalsa soldiers encamped at a place now called Tis-Hazari from where they moved to plunder Malka Ganj, Sabzi Mandi and Mughal Pura. On 9th March, 1783, the son of Rao Dhiraj Ram was killed. Jassa Singh broke through Ajmeri Gate and ravaged the whole area called Hauz Qazi. The inhabitants fled into the Red Fort for shelter.

Mirza Shikoh and Fazal Ali Khan tried to restrain the Sikhs, but they were met with utter failure. Shah Alam got frightened and he made an emergent call to Begam Samru of Sardana in Meerut district to come to his rescue. She was invited in particular since she had good relations with Baghel Singh.

Before she could play her part, the Sikhs ravaged the whole

---

1. *History of the Sikhs*, IV, Munshi Ram Manohar Lal, 1995, p. 88.



city and a huge booty fell into their hands. They deposited the same at Majnu ka Tilla and posted a strong guard to keep a strong vigil on it. Just at this time, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia arrived at Delhi from Hissar at the head of 1000 troops, hopefully to get a share in the booty as also in the shine of the Sikh ascendancy.

On the twelfth day of March, the Sikhs entered the Red fort, the symbol of Mughal glory and power. The Mughal Emperor and his courtiers hid themselves in their private apartments. The Sikhs straightway entered Diwan-i-Am and made Jassa Singh sit on the throne, waved fan made of peacock feathers over his head and proclaimed him Badshah—King. This was the most glorious day in the history of the Sikhs.

They occupied that very throne from which were issued orders for their destruction and now they held the unchallenged authority at Delhi. Now they could galvanise themselves into an all India power but they restrained themselves. Political realities and their own affairs including internecine warfare among the Sikh chiefs precluded them from playing all India rule.

By this time, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia arrived at the scene. He could not restrain his innate hostile feelings about Ahluwalia. He instead of offering his advice and co-operation to Ahluwalia to consolidate Sikh power at Delhi or perpetuate dominance of the Sikhs at Delhi, utilised his genius to smudge his glory. He raised an ideological issue and objected to his seating himself on the throne as none without the consent of Sarbat Khalsa could legitimately announce himself as the Badshah—King of the Sikhs much less of Delhi. Sardar Ahluwalia who cared more for Sikh ethics at once responded and got down the throne.

The same day Begam Samru arrived at Delhi. She had been friendly with Baghel Singh because he saved her during a Sikh incursion of Meerut district. She started negotiations with the Sikhs. To hammer out a settlement, she visited Baghel Singh's camp at Tis Hazari because Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia had assigned him the authority to make settlement with the Emperor. A settlement was made on which signature of the Emperor and impression of royal seal were affixed to validate it. The terms of the settlement were as under :

- i) The bulk of the Sikh soldiers would immediately return from Delhi.
- ii) Baghel Singh would stay in the capital with his 4000 troops. He will also be responsible for maintaining law

and order in Delhi.

- iii) Baghel Singh would charge six annas in a rupee (37.5%) of all the income from octroi duties in the capital to meet the expenses on the construction of Gurdwaras and the maintenance of his troops.
- iv) Baghel Singh would establish his camp at Sabzi Mandi.
- v) The Sikhs would not misbehave in any way during their stay in the capital.
- vi) Baghel Singh assumed the authority to build seven Gurdwaras at seven places. These Gurdwaras were to be finished as early as possible but not beyond the current year,

Most of the Sikhs left Delhi. They were given a cash payment of three lakh rupees for the Karah Prasad.

Baghel Singh, Khushal Singh Singhpuria, Tara Singh Ghaiba, Karam Singh Nirmala, Bhag Singh of Thanesar and Sahib Singh of Khondah at the head of 10000 horse men stayed behind. They stationed themselves at Sabzi Mandi—Tis Hazari area.

Five-eighth that is 62.5% of the daily collection of the octroi was regularly deposited in the government treasury every day. The Sikh horsemen patrolled the streets and suburbs day and night, and perfect peace and order were established in the city.

Baghel Singh immediately after the conclusion of settlement set himself to construct the Gurdwaras. The first Gurdwara was built at Teliwara in memory of Mata Sundri and Mata Sahib Kaur, who had lived at Delhi for sometime. The second Gurdwara was raised in Jai Singhpura where Guru Harkishan Sahib had stayed in the house of Raja Jai Singh of Jaipur. Now it is called Gurdwara Bangla Sahib. Memorials were erected at the places of cremation of Shri Guru Harkishan Sahib, Mata Sundri and Mata Sahib Kaur. A Gurdwara was also built there.

There were two places connected with Guru Tegh Bahadur. One was at Kotwali adjoining Chandni Chowk where Guru Tegh Bahadur was beheaded, and the other was at Rakab Ganj where Guru Tegh Bahadur's headless body was cremated by Lakhi Shah. Both these places had mosques constructed on them. In order to build Gurdwaras, mosques had to be pulled down. As mosque is integral part of the Muslim faith, they loathed their destruction. They gathered together to register their protest and anger at the

contemplated destruction of their mosques. They went to the Emperor to take a stand on the issue. He did present the case to Sardar Baghel Singh but he could not go beyond limit because he himself had permitted the Sardar to raise gurdwaras on the aforesaid sites. Baghel Singh asked the Muslims to send their representatives to him to sort out the matter. They came and explained their viewpoint only to be convinced that the Sikhs had a better right over the sites because of their direct connections with their prophets. In his support, he quoted from Muslim religious books that mosque built on sacred places of other religious communities was such an act that could not get the approval of God.

Lest Muslims' habitual communal euphoria erupt in violence, he asked the Sikh chieftains to hold territories near by Delhi to demonstrate their concern for the Sikh gurdwaras at Delhi. The Muslims at long last had to acquiesce and both the gurdwaras were built in a record time. At Rakab Ganj, the mosque was demolished and then on its site the gurdwara was raised. At Kotwali, the gurdwara was built just a few yards away from the mosque at the site which an old Muslim lady had spotted as the right place where the ninth Guru made his supreme sacrifice. It was believed that she had the information from her husband who washed the place after the Guru's head was chopped off.

On the completion of the Sis-Ganj gurdwara, a granthi was appointed and a Jagir was assigned to it.

The sixth gurdwara was constructed at Majnu ka Tilla where Guru Nanak along with Mardana had sojourned and unfolded to a Sufi saint, the mysteries of God and His message conveyed to him at Bein rivulet. The place was also made sanctimonious by Guru Hargobind, who encamped here before meeting the Emperor, Jehangir.

The seventh gurdwara constructed by Baghel Singh was at Moti Bagh where Guru Gobind Singh rested before departing to Agra.

It took eight months in total to build gurdwaras. These gurdwaras were endowed liberally by grants of a number of villages to everyone of them.<sup>1</sup>

Baghel Singh planned to retire from Delhi in December 1783. He thanked the Mughal Emperor for his co-operation in the construction of gurdwaras. The Emperor also expressed his pleasure at the excellent job done by the Sardar.

1. Sewa Singh, *Sardar Baghel Singh*, Urdu, Asr., 1925, p. 181.

Upto now Baghel Singh in person had never met Shah Alam II. Now on the verge of Baghel Singh's departure, he invited the Sardar to meet him through his special emissary. The Sardar according to Rattan Singh Bhangu, told him that he had certain conditions before he could meet the Emperor. Firstly, he had pledged never to bow before Mughal rulers and so he would not bow. Secondly, he would be accompanied by an armed contingent. Thirdly, no one would pass any remark on him or on his contingent while they would be passing through streets and bazaars. In the event of any indecent remark, he reserved the right of punishing the offending people. The Emperor accepted all the conditions. Baghel Singh at the head of a body of Sikh soldiers seated himself on a horse and trudged from Sabzi Mandi to the Red Fort. Along the route, the Emperor had appointed his high-ranking men to take care that none could spoil the calm. Having approached the Emperor's Durbar, Baghel Singh and five to seven Sardars including Dulcha Singh and Sada Singh dismounted while the contingent of horsemen continued to sit in their saddles. Baghel Singh on reaching Diwan-i-Am greeted the Emperor with 'Sat Sri Akal'. The Prime Minister offered chairs to Sardars. Usual courtesies were exchanged between the Emperor and Sardar Baghel Singh.

The Emperor offered him a Khillat, a fully caprisoned elephant, a horse and a necklace of pearls. The Sardars accompanying him were also honoured. Baghel Singh was granted 12.5 percent of the octroi duty of Delhi to be remitted to his headquarter Chhalondi annually on the condition that he would prevent the Sikhs from attacking Delhi. He continued receiving money till his death.<sup>1</sup>

### *Convulsions among the British*

Baghel Singh's stay at Delhi caused convulsions among the British who upto now had made up their mind to be the successor of the Mughal Empire. The Sikh dominion at Delhi upset their plan. Warren Hastings, the second governor of East India Company, now took steps to turn away the Sikhs from Delhi and the Ganga Doab through negotiations as well as by organising a confederacy against them. He deputed James Brown to Agra and Delhi. He

1. Khushwaqt Rai, *Twarikh-i-Sikhan* (1811) MS. Dr. Ganda Singh's private collections, Patiala.

(Brown) reached Agra in February 1783 wherefrom he wrote a letter to Baghel Singh who handed it over to his assistant, Lakhpat Rai. Baghel Singh, on his part, did not take the letter seriously as he did not like to be diverted from his target of constructing the gurdwaras. Lakhpat Rai suggested to Brown as a response to his letter that he should correspond with Jassa Singh Ahluwalia who was the highest authority among the Sikhs and who was reverently called 'Badshah Singh'. J. Brown wrote a number of letters; he also came to Delhi in December, 1783 only to find that Baghel Singh had left Delhi a while earlier.

The Emperor considered it politically sagacious and safe to appoint Mahadji Sindhia as Regent in December, 1784. Before that, he had in his mind to bestow this office on Baghel Singh whom he considered capable of protecting crown lands and of subduing the rebellious Mansabdars. Warren Hastings came to Lucknow from Calcutta to design some scheme to replace the Emperor with his son Jahandar Khan but he could not succeed, notwithstanding his untiring efforts.

Baghel Singh did not take advantage of the situation. Had he done so, the history of India might have taken an entirely different course.

Whether he acted rightly or wrongly, the issue needs examination of the circumstances, than obtaining. The Sikhs at that time were not a united lot. They were involved in mutual warfare.

Even under such circumstances, they did join together to face common danger to their survival, but it was not possible for them to get united to dominate the whole country because in that case they had to shed their mutual rancours and jealousies which they were unprepared to do. Except Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, there was no common link among the Sikhs and he too was more interested in consolidating the Sikh power in Trans-Sutlej region. This being the perspective, Baghel Singh was considerably right while showing indifference to the wishes of the Mughal Emperor.

### *Sack of Chandausi*

In the beginning of 1785, a large horde of the Sikhs numbering about 30,000 under the leadership of Baghel Singh and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia crossed the river Ganga and entered Rohil Khand, which was under the protection of the British, although formally it was still the part of the state of Oudh. Proceeding further, they razed to the ground the villages of Barsi and

Mahmudpur, inhabited by Sayyads. Then they decided to attack Moradabad on 14th January 1785. Meanwhile they were reported that Chandausi (44 kms from Moradabad) was a city of 200 bankers and very wealthy traders. They changed their mind and attacked the place.

According to George Forster, "The Sikh forces assembled again in the beginning of the year 1785 when they entered the province of Rohil Khand and having laid it waste for the space of hundred miles they returned unmolested." According to Hamilton, "This predatory incursion gave the camp-de-grace to the trade of Rohil Khand as thenceforward no man would venture his property in a country equally destitute of protection from arbitrary exaction within and plundering adventurers from without."

Banke Khan, the chief of the place had left the place for fear of the Sikhs. His deputies, Chhattu Lal and Sobha Ram whom he had assigned the responsibility to protect the city also fled. The Sikhs plundered the city to their satisfaction and according to Dr. H.R. Gupta, booty worth about one crore fell into the hands of the Sikhs.

#### *Settlement with Mahadji Sindhia, 1785*

As alluded in foregoing paragraphs, Mahadji Sindhia had been appointed Regent of the Mughal Empire. He wished to stop the Sikh raids into the Ganga Doab and the Delhi region. He, therefore, asked his agent Amba Ji Ingle to enter into parleys with Baghel Singh and other Sikh Sardars. In May 1785, a settlement was reached with the Sikhs that they would not lay any exaction on crown lands, and in lieu thereof, the Marathas agreed to pay the one-third of the revenue realised from their Pattis or tracts which owed them allegiance. The Sikhs did not keep their promise and continued to raid the Gangetic Doab. Two years later in June 1787, Ingle led an expedition into the cis-Sutlej region, Baghel Singh joined him as he, according to a separate settlement with him, had been awarded parganas worth four lakhs of rupees a year. Just at this time, the Raja of Jaipur visited Baghel Singh at Thanesar with offers of a large sum of money to get his help against Mahadji Sindhia who had been fighting against the Raja. Baghel Singh took the money and promised to play his part to provide relief to the ruler of Jaipur. He also very cleverly persuaded Ingle to retire. Merely through shrewd diplomacy he saved the cis-Sutlej region from the contemplated attack of Ingle and Jaipur from



the growing pressure of Sindhia. In the process he appropriated a large sum of money.

In August 1787, Ghulam Qadir attacked and ravaged Delhi. Shah Alam II made impassioned appeal to Baghel Singh for help. He did not take care, although he outwardly had expressed his respect for him so many times. In a special message which Rur Mal conveyed to Baghel Singh, he was asked by the Emperor to seize the territories of Ghulam Qadir as he had been appointed as his agent in that region. He also sent rescript in his favour authorising him to capture Ghulam Qadir's territories. Baghel Singh, however, did not comply with the Emperor's order—rather he joined Ghulam Qadir. To the Emperor he simply sent a word that he had been constrained to do so because Mahadji Sindhia did not care for him. Ghulam Qadir entered Delhi on September 5, and the Emperor conferred upon him the lofty title of Amir-ul-Umra. He was also made 'Bakhshi' of his empire. Later the Sikhs turned against Ghulam Qadir also and ravaged his territory.

In 1788, 1789 and 1794, the Marathas led campaigns to cis-Sutlej region. In 1788 Rane Khan and Ali Bahadur led the campaign. Baghel Singh joined them. In 1789 Mahadji Sindhia gave him a Jagir and he in return promised that he would restrain Sikh chieftains from plundering Imperial territory. In 1789, Dhar Rao marched into cis-Sutlej region. Baghel Singh joined them forthwith. The Marathas made for Patiala. Diwan Nanu Mal of Patiala promised to pay two lakhs of rupees if the Marathas would help Patiala to recover territories seized by its neighbours. The territories were recovered from the chiefs of Kaithal and Jullundur. Baghel Singh received his share from both sides.

In 1794, the Marathas again led a campaign, this time under the command of Anta Rao and Lachhman Rao. Baghel Singh became their guide. The chiefs of Jind, Kaithal, Thanesar and Radaur submitted. All of them advanced to Patiala. Tara Singh Ghaiba came to the help of Patiala from trans-Sutlej area. A battle was fought at Mardanpur near Ambala. The Marathas were forced to retreat to Karnal.

In 1797, George Thomas, an Irish adventurer, appeared near Delhi. He had established himself as an independent ruler at Hansi and posed a danger to the Sikhs. Baghel Singh along with other Sikh chieftains of Sirhind region joined Perron, a French General who captured Delhi for his Master, Daulat Rao Sindhia. George Thomas was defeated and expelled.

Baghel Singh had throughout maintained good relations with most of the Sardars of the Misl. He had special regard for Jai Singh Kanhiya whom he always extended unstinted support whenever he demanded. Even after Jai Singh's death Baghel Singh continued to support the Kanhiyas.

Sardar Baghel Singh died in 1802 according to Gian Singh. Sir Lepel Griffin's averment is that Baghel Singh and Bhag Singh of Jind joined the British army with their contingents in January 1805 and if this is correct, then Baghel Singh seems to have died either at the close of 1805 or in the beginning of 1806.

As long as Baghel Singh lived he lived with honour and dignity. His military genius was as laudable as his pragmatic sense. Besides, he was a master negotiator and had a special knack to always remain the cynosure of adversaries as well as friends. His military genius was as laudable as his pragmatic sense. Besides, he was a master negotiator and had a special knack to always remain the cynosure of adversaries as well as friends. His administration too was efficient when judged from the contemporary standards.

In person he was tall, well-built with cat-like brownish eyes and slightly blackish colour. He was brave like a lion, highly kind-hearted and liberal in his approach and demeanour. His subjects were happy with him. Peasants and shopkeepers were comfortable. His country yielded 9 lakhs of rupees annually.<sup>1</sup> He ruled over an extensive territory with consideration. To the needy and the oppressed, he was ever ready to extend help.

Service of the Guru was a passion with him. Whenever he seized opportunity, he at once came forward to contribute his mite in the service of the Panth. In the settlement which he made with Shah Alam, he did not fight shy to insert term that the Sikhs would be allowed to build seven gurdwaras at Delhi. Then he took upon himself to construct the gurdwaras. At another time, when the Sikhs lay their hands upon a huge booty, he was one of the two chief chieftains to appeal to the Sikh chieftains to collect donations in cash to be spent on the repairs and renovations of the buildings at Darbar Sahib complex. He took pleasure to administer Pahul to the princes and people alike. Raja Sahib Singh was initiated by him.

Baghel Singh's parganas of Sarhali, Sabraon and Tam Taran

---

1. Dr. H.R. Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*.

in Bari Doab were annexed by Maharaja Ranjit Singh immediately after the demise of Baghel Singh. Baghel Singh's one wife Rup Kaur was at Hariana near Hoshiarpur. She managed her trans-Sutlej estates during the life-time of her husband. She was assisted by the son of Baghel Singh's sister whose name was Mohar Singh. After his death, Rup Kaur's brother was appointed to his place. He also passed away soon.

In 1806, Ranjit Singh seized Rup Kaur's entire territory and property. The pargana of Sham Chaurasi was handed over to Jodh Singh son of Sardar Gurbakhsh Singh, who was a friend of Baghel Singh. Baghel Singh's second wife Ram Kaur ruled at Chhalondi and his third wife Rattan Kaur ruled at Kalawar. In his first expedition into cis-Sutlej area in 1806, Ranjit Singh deprived them of their estates in Karnal district. The parganas of Chhalondi and Khurdian were awarded to Jodh Singh Kalsi and Bahlopur was transferred to his Kardar Vir Bhan. Ram Kaur was given only four villages for sustenance.

In 1808, the Maharaja took possession of Kalawar including the entire cash amounting to 24 lakhs and four guns.

The two widows were allowed to keep two villages each in their erstwhile Jagirs.

After the treaty of Amritsar in 1809, Ram Kaur went to Ludhiana to make an appeal to Colonel Ochterlony for restoration of her territory to her. The Colonel accepted the appeal and Jodh Singh and Vir Bhan had to return her territories. After some time Jodh Singh Kalsi began to trouble. Colonel Ochterlony again intervened and warned Jodh Singh. The vast property worth several lakhs of rupees and territory lapsed to the British Government on Ram Kaur's death in 1820.

## **V. Nishanwala Misl**

The Misl was named Nishanwala because its founders were bearers of 'Nishan' whose English equivalent is standard or banner. In 1733, the Sikhs accepted the terms of Zakariya Khan, the governor of the Punjab and consequent upon it, they stopped pursuing their anti-state activities. During this period of relative calm, they engaged themselves in putting their house in order. They divided the whole Sikh body into Buddha Dal, and Taruna Dal which was further divided into five sections. At that time it was also decided to have five flags one each for four sections and one for the Khalsa Dal. Since each flag symbolised group identity,

a resolve and a determination, they were held in very high respect. When the Khalsa would embark upon an expedition, offerings were made to the flags and pledges were taken with folded hands or with swords raised high. At the conclusion of an expedition, the Khalsa gathered and made obeisance to the banners. The national flag of the Sikhs was of saffron colour, superimposed with double-edged sword within a quoit. At the time of actual fighting, the flags were kept in the base camp under proper guard while the members of the Misl participated in the fighting. Dasondha Singh and his four companions, Sangat Singh, Jai Singh, Koer Singh of Kairon and Man Singh Dandak carried the five flags on horsebacks in the fore-front. They and their followers began to be called Nishanwalias and their Misl as Nishanwala. Dasondha Singh was a devoted Sikh nourished on Sikh ideology and Sikh tradition by his parents who were committed Sikhs and resided at Singhanwala in Ferozepur district. At the young age, his moustaches turned grey and he was nicknamed 'Dhaul Muchhiya' (grey moustached). His piety coupled with his religious zeal impressed Bhai Mani Singh so much that he started taking interest in him with the result that he received Pahul from Bhai Mani Singh. He belonged to Gill caste of Jat, but he never allowed caste consideration to influence his outlook. He was a recognised leader of the Taruna Dal and was declared the undisputed Sardar of Nishanwala Misl in 1748. Nishanwala Misl and Dallewala Misl were kept as reserve forces at Amritsar.

After the conquest of Sirhind province (January 1764) Dasondha Singh took possession of Singhanwala in Ferozepur district, Sahnewal in Ludhiana district, Sarae Lashkari Khan, west of Lehmana, Doraha 7 kms from Sahnewal, Amloh, Zira, Ludhar, and Ambala where he established his headquarters. He was killed in May 1767, at Meerut in the sudden attack by Jahan Khan and Zabita Khan.

Dasondha Singh was succeeded by his younger brother Sangat Singh. He built a brickwall around the city of Ambala to protect it from robbers and marauders. Since Ambala suffered from scarcity of water, he appointed his cousin, Gurbakhsh Singh and Lal Singh paternal uncle's sons as incharges of Ambala. He himself retired to Singhanwala where he died in 1774.

Lal Singh built a fort at Jamaitgarh which bordered Patiala state. Raja Amar Singh of Patiala, Raja Gajpat Singh of Jind and Rae Ilyas of Raikot attacked Lal Singh to dissuade him from

completing the fort but they did not succeed and the construction continued till its completion.

After Lal Singh's demise, his three sons divided his territory among themselves. They also drove out Gurbakhsh Singh, who after leaving Ambala, settled at Morinda.

Ambala and Zira went to the share of Mohar Singh, Singhanwala to Kapur Singh and Sarae Lashkari Khan to Lal Singh's youngest son, Anup Singh.

Mohar Singh gained prominence among the cis-Sutlej Sikh chiefs and got himself involved in internecine politics which had no lofty objectives. On 14th September 1779, he waited upon Abdul Ahad Khan who was then leading an expedition against Patiala. Two years after when Shafi, another Mughal general, led an expedition against the cis-Sutlej Sikh chieftains, he plundered the provisions being supplied by the *Banjaras*.

When in 1785 Mahadji Sindhia the regent of the Mughal Empire, decided to win over the Sikhs and sent Amba Ji Ingle to negotiate with the Sikhs, Mohar Singh and Dulha Singh were asked to represent them. On May 9, 1785, the treaty was arrived at and Mohar Singh was granted a robe of honour, necklaces of pearls, horses and a handsome amount for his travelling expenses.

Very decisive, quick in action, highly resilient, Mohar Singh suffered from a tragic flaw and that was that he was dangerously impulsive and haughty. He treated his subjects harshly, sometimes cruelly. One day in the winter of 1785, he discharged an arrow and killed a Sayyad sitting all alone basking in the sun shine. This cold-blooded murder caused a wave of deep resentment. The opportunity was seized by Gurbakhsh Singh of Morinda. He lost no time to march upon Ambala with his forces. The people welcomed him. A hard contested battle took place in which Mohar Singh met his end. His widows retired to his estate, Zira. Gurbakhsh Singh died in 1786 issueless. His widow Daya Kaur assumed the leadership of the Misl. She resided in a fort situated to the north-east of the city called Dhulkot.

Mohar Singh's brother Kapur Singh and his son lost their lives in 1797 in a battle with Dayal Singh of Lahore. Anup Singh was severely wounded who a little after died at his residence. His widow Sobh Rani ruled at Sarae Lashkari Khan. She was ousted by Ranjit Singh. The estate of Zira belonging to Mohar Singh's widow was attacked by Mohkam Chand in 1786 and was taken over by Ranjit Singh.

Rani Daya Kaur proved to be an excellent ruler. According to Lepel Griffin, "her estate was one of the best managed in the protected territory". In her rule people enjoyed perfect security and mutual harmony. She was a disciplinarian par excellence. She kept a strict watchover the personal morals of the people. Her personal stance was above reproach. Such a lady not only won over the approbation of the people, even the British government treated her with great courtesy and consideration. In her task, she was assiduously assisted by his deputy Des Raj Mittal of Ambala City.

In November 1808, Maharaja Ranjit Singh uprooted her. He drove her out of the City (Ambala) and divided her territory among Bhag Singh of Jind, his maternal uncle and his ally Lal Singh of Kaithal.

In 1809 by the treaty of Amritsar, the cis-Sutlej chiefs passed under the British protection. Daya Kaur appealed to Colonel Ochterlony for the restoration of her territory to her.

Ochterlony forced Bhag Singh and Lal Singh to withdraw their forces. Daya Kaur accordingly again became the master of her territories. Her benign rule came to an end in 1823 when she relinquished her mortal frame. Her estate and property lapsed to the British Government.

## **VI. Shaheedi Misl**

The founder of Shaheedi Misl was Deep Singh, a Sandhu Jat of Pahuwind village of district Amritsar. He was born to his parents, Bhai Bhagta Ji and Bibi Jeoni in A.D. 1682. He learnt early lessons in Sikh religion from his parents. A roving Nirmala preacher familiarised him with the deeper meaning of Sikhism, especially its ethical part.

He acquired knowledge of Urdu and Persian, possibly from a Madrasa. His hand-writing in Punjabi was excellent. His knowledge of Braj, Sanskrit and Punjabi was very deep. He had the privilege of enjoying the patronage of Bhai Mani Singh.

According to Giani Gian Singh, he remained with the Guru from 1700 to 1706, the most turbulent and the most creative period of Sikh history.

He saw for himself how the Guru faced Mughal Imperial assault and how the unprincipled and perfidious hill monarchs conducted themselves, how the Guru had to vacate Anandpur Sahib and had to fight against the Mughal forces all the way to Chamkaur Sahib and then to Mukatsar, how despite the heaviest



odds, the Guru was able to write letters and Fateh Nama named *Zafarnama*, how the Guru's own illustrious example boosted the morale of the Sikhs. He also enjoyed the holy presence of Guru Gobind Singh at Damdama Sahib, then known as Talwandi Sabo. He was simply swayed by the greatness and holiness of the Guru.

When Bhai Mani Singh departed from Damdama, Deep Singh took charge of the place. It was under his supervision that a shrine was built there in honour of the stay of the Guru and was named Damdama which literally means 'a breathing place'. Deep Singh, besides spreading Guru's gospel among the people of the Malwa region, especially in the area of Bhatinda, soon busied himself in making four copies of Guru Granth Sahib which had been authenticated and finalised by Guru Gobind Singh when he was at Damdama.

These copies, one each, were sent to Akal Takhat, Amritsar and the Takhats at Patna, Anandpur and Damdama. He had the rare honour of committing the whole Guru Granth Sahib to memory. No wonder, he was the beau ideal of the Sikhs who reverently called him 'Baba' and assigned divinity to him. According to Dr. Bhagat Singh, the copies of Guru Granth Sahib were prepared by him in ten years beginning from 1716.

From 1716 to 1757, Deep Singh mostly lived at Damdama, keeping himself fully posted with activities of the Sikhs. Earlier too, he led a very active life supporting Banda Singh Bahadur and participating in his wars for the establishment of the Khalsa sovereignty. His prominent companions included Gurbakhsh Singh of village Leel, in the pargana of Khem Karan, Sudh Singh of the village Dokoha in the pargana of Jullundur and Prem Singh, Sher Singh, Dargaha Singh and Hira Singh.<sup>1</sup>

For ten years since 1716, he stayed at Damdama because he intended to carry on his work of preaching and consolidating the Sikhs outside direct gaze of Mughals because the area of Damdama did not possess any geopolitical significance in the eyes of the then Mughal rulers. But his chosen objective, fortunately, was not a sort of withdrawal, rather he continued to be the cynosure of the Sikhs who were all praise for his life-style which indisputably was that of a saint-soldier. In 1733, when Nawab Kapur Singh divided Taruna Dal into five sections, he was made incharge of the one. Deep Singh even after shouldering onerous responsibilities

---

1. Gian Singh, *Twarikh Guru Khalsa* (ed. 1970), p. 261.

of being the head of his section continued to post himself at Damdama which upto then had also become the head-quarter of his Misl.

Deep Singh's conduct reflected Miri-Piri spirit all the time. Whenever the Dal Khalsa sought shelter in the region of Malwa, Deep Singh joined them. The contemporary Harcharan Das says that the Sikhs and Jats of Sirhind province chose a Dharnat Shah as their ruler in 1740. It appears that this Dharnat Shah was none other than Deep Singh himself. In 1757 at the battle of Dharsual he fought at the head of the Dal Khalsa on the side of Ala Singh against Bhattis.

Ahmad Shah Durrani conquered the Punjab in 1752. During his fourth invasion in 1756-57, he annexed the Sirhind province, and extended his kingdom to the river Jamuna. He appointed his son, Timur Shah, the governor of Punjab with his commander-in-chief Jahan Khan to carry on the administration. His discerning eyes had seen that the Sikhs were a challenge to the stability of his rule. He left instructions to his son that he should keep a strict vigil on their activities and take steps to destroy them root and branch. Accordingly, Timur Shah left no stone unturned to crush them. He sent roving military contingents to kill the Sikhs wherever they were found. He pillaged the city of Kartarpur which had been founded by Guru Arjan Dev and where Guru Hargobind resided for some time. He made Sodhi Wadbhag Singh, famous for his saintliness and lofty conduct, the special target of his wrath. Sodhi Wadbhag Singh was so mercilessly caned that he fell unconscious—almost half dead. Not only this, Timur passed orders forbidding the Sikhs to have even a glimpse of Sri Harimandir Sahib, not to speak of having a dip in the pool of Immortality. All this happened in 1755.

It was under these circumstances that Deep Singh collected a large number of followers determined to get vacated the holy city of Amritsar from the Afghans and illuminate Harimandir Sahib on the upcoming Diwali on 11th November 1757. As Deep Singh passed from village to village to reach Amritsar, the youths surcharged with Khalsa ideals joined him. At Tam Taran, the number swelled to five thousand, most of whom belonged to villages of Jaga, Daraj, Bachhu, Gobindpur, Kot and Lakhī jungle (all in Malwa region). Here they bathed in the holy tank to feel inspired and encouraged to take up their intended project. They tied festal ribbons round their wrists and sprinkled saffron colour

on their turbans as if they were out to fight for and win brides for themselves. They fully prepared themselves for self-sacrifice.

They gathered in a body at a place on the roadside where now a monument stands. There facing Sri Harimandir Sahib at Amritsar, they vowed that they would not come back alive until they had celebrated the Diwali.

The news was conveyed to Jahan Khan at Lahore by the officer incharge of Tarn Taran sub-division. Deep Singh and his comrades reached Amritsar and busied themselves at performing religious rites and ceremonies. Jahan Khan moved forthwith out of Lahore at the head of his soldiers to reach Amritsar. Before departure, he ordered Haji Atai Khan to wind up his assigned work of chastising the Sikhs elsewhere and rush to Amritsar to join him in his campaign to crush the Sikhs. He also asked in the manner of valayat that everybody, whether a servant of the state or otherwise, possessing a horse must follow him in the battlefield. So vehement he was in his intentions that ex-governor Mughlani Begam, who loathed him otherwise, had to send her tiny posse of 25 soldiers. Qasim Khan also hastened to join Jahan Khan with his men. On the second day of the march from Lahore to Amritsar, Jahan Khan reached a place 8 kms on this side of Amritsar, now known as Gohalwarh. Jahan Khan felt confused at least for sometime, when he found that Atai Khan had not reached in spite of his strict instructions. Miskin, who was an eye-witness and took part in the fight writes, "The Sikhs received intelligence of adversary's forces. They at once attacked us on all the four sides, The battle began and both the parties rained bullets on each other. The Sikhs closely besieged us and fought so vigorously that our men got exhausted and out of desperation ran for their safety. Wazir (Jahan Khan) with agility and determination did his best to stop his soldiers. At that juncture, this Miskin with two mounted troopers was with him. As the Sikhs had left no leeway for the fleeing soldiers to escape, they had to return to the main army dejected and disappointed. Jahan Khan then drew his sword out of the scabbard and wounded some of his own men who had tried to flee saying, 'Why do you flee?' In short we all gathered and started fighting again. The fighting was so intense that everyone felt totally exhausted. Miskin displayed so much valour that none would believe me if I were to describe it."

At this stage, Haji Atai Khan arrived with his triumphant army and the ill-natured Sikhs, who prided on their courage and bravery,

were defeated by the relentless swords and ruthless guns. The wretches could not face opposition and took resort to flight. The victorious army gave them a close pursuit as far as Chak Guru. It was a sacred place and at its door we saw five Sikh infantry men. The heroes of our army pounced upon them and put them to death. At this place, Mir Nea Matullah Khan, one of the Lahore grandees, lost his life in the conflict. Then our victorious army encamped there."

In the battle Deep Singh and Jaimal Shah, one of the Afghan commanders, engaged in hand to hand fight in which both of them received mortal wounds. It is said that at this moment one of Deep Singh's companions reminded him how he had vowed to lay down his life at the feet of the Guru in the precincts of Harimandir Sahib. Deep Singh's inner yearnings to fulfil his vow became intense and he was spurred to go to the extreme. He supported his wounded head with one of his hands and fought on and on till he traversed a distance of 3 kms to fall dead in the precincts of the Golden Temple where now a memorial stands in his honour.

The important Sikhs who laid down their lives included Dharam Singh, Khem Singh, Man Singh, Ram Singh, Sant Singh, Sajjan Singh, Bahadur Singh, Hira Singh and Akhrah Singh.<sup>1</sup> Deep Singh's Jatha henceforth began to be called Shaheedi Jatha. Later they carved out Shaheedi Misl. It was also called a Nihang Misl as its members and Sardars wore "blue chequered clothes, put bangles of steel (Karhas) round their wrists and a circular, sharpened bright quoit round their head."

Who were those five infantrymen whom Misikin mentions in his eye-witness account? Their names have been listed differently by different historians. Dr. Hari Ram Gupta records that they were Deep Singh, Gurbakhsh Singh, Sher Singh, Dargaha Singh and Basant Singh. One name that is to say, Baba Deep Singh was certainly not among them. About Baba Gurbakhsh Singh also it is very difficult for us to agree because he laid down his life much later.

The leadership of Shaheedi Misl passed on to Sudha Singh of Dukohewala. He was killed in the Ghallughara (Great Holocaust) of 1762. Karam Singh, a Sidhu Jat of Mah Ra Ka village 35 kms west of Lahore succeeded him. In January 1764, at the conquest of Sirhind he seized a number of villages in the parganas of Kesri and Shahzadpur in Ambala district, yielding about one

1. Gian Singh, *Twarikh Guru Khalsa*, op. cit., p. 263.

lakh rupees annually. He resided at Kesri. Shahzadpur was given to his brother Dharam Singh but after his death, it was occupied by Karam Singh because he had no issue. He gave Baragaon to Mai Desan for her maintenance.

Karam Singh lived for most of his time at Damdama Sahib. He took special care of Damdama Sahib as it had been the abode of the tenth Guru and since then the seat of Sikh religious authority. It is said that Karam Singh kept a contingent of 404 Sikhs with two guns and ten Zamburas at Damdama to meet any eventuality. He also took care that service of the gurdwara was done in keeping with the traditions laid down by Baba Deep Singh. Karam Singh's personal stance was that of true Khalsa ever ready to respond the call of the afflicted and the aggrieved.

In 1768, he received a complaint of a Brahmin that his married daughter had been forcibly seized by Hasan Khan, the Nawab of Jalalabad Lohari. Karam Singh felt awfully upset and spurred by the moral rage, made a call to the Khalsa to take steps to restore the daughter to her father. His call met a ready response and he led an army of the Sikhs to Jalalabad. The Nawab opposed with all his might, but he was ultimately defeated. He was tied to a cot and was roasted alive. Nawab's agent, a Hindu Kalal, who supplied information to him regarding the beautiful girls of the Hindu families, was publicly beheaded. The daughter of the Brahmin was restored to her husband. The food cooked by the girl was served to all the Brahmins of the village of her husband so that they might not degrade the girl as well as her husband as it had been their wont to look down upon such girls as had been forcibly abducted by the Muslims. The Sikhs provided the husband with a handsome amount to assure good treatment for the girl.<sup>1</sup>

In 1773, Karam Singh Shaheed over-ran a large tract of land belonging to Zabita Khan Rohilla in the upper Ganga Doab. He sacked Nanautah on December 11, 1773. In September 1780, Karam Singh participated in the internecine warfare among the Sikhs. He was on the side of Baghel Singh. Karam Singh with Diwan Singh at the head of 1500 horse crossed the river Jamuna at Kunjpura, and encamped on the opposite side at Ghat Makanak in the Ganga Doab. Zabita Khan was 15 kms away from them. He deputed his Wakil Bilas Rai to negotiate with the Sikh chief. Bilas Rai brought all the Sardars to Zabita's camp at Bidauli 16 kms

---

1. Rattan Singh Bhangu (1841) Amritsar 1939, pp. 431-33.



from Karnal. Nothing came out of the conference. Karam Singh possessed the parganas of Bartha and a bank hundi in Saharanpur district, worth one lakh of rupees annually. These were taken over by the British government in A.D. 1808.

Towards the end of 1779, Karam Singh arrived in the camp of Prince Abdul Ahad at Karnal and presented two horses and some other gifts. He was also honoured with a Khillat of five pieces, a sarpech and a sword. Some other chiefs, including Baghel Singh Karor Singhia and Sahib Singh Khundawala also met the prince. These chiefs intended to join the Imperial camp with a view to crush their opponents with the assistance of the King's forces as also to plunder the territory of Maharaja of Patiala whose escalating influence they did not like.<sup>1</sup>

Karam Singh died in 1794. The forces of the Shaheed Misl comprised 2000 horsemen.<sup>2</sup> Karam Singh was succeeded by his eldest son, Gulab Singh who was incompetent as a ruler. On January 4, 1804 he met Colonel Ochterlony of the East India Company at Karnal and offered assistance to the British. He also appealed to him to place him under their protection. Ochterlony obliged him by giving a recommendatory letter in which he mentioned that Gulab Singh sought asylum under East India Company. He should be considered as a faithful follower of the British and his interests should be watched by whosoever followed him.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of Gulab Singh's inefficiency and pusillanimity, the Shaheed Misl was always held in high esteem by the Sikhs for its past record of selfless service. It was in this perspective that when Maharaja Ranjit Singh conquered Naraingarh in 1807 during his second cis-Sutlej campaign, he did not interfere in the affairs of Shahzadpur because of his regard for the Misl. Gulab Singh died in 1844.<sup>4</sup>

### *Gulab Singh's Successors*

Gulab Singh was succeeded by his son, Shiv Kirpal Singh, who was then only six years of age. He sided with the British in the Indian Mutiny and earned their good-will. He held estates

1. *Tarikh-i-Khandan-i-Rajahai*, MS. G.S., p. 40;  
Muhammad Hasan Khan, *Tarikh-i-Patiala*, Amritsar, 1878, p. 114.
2. *Tarikh Phulkian*, p. 61.
3. Gian Singh, op. cit., p. 265.
4. Lepel Griffin, *Rajas of the Punjab*, Lahore, 1870, p. 44.



which accrued annual income to the tune of Rs. 3000. He continued to be guardian of the Damdama Sahib gurdwara. He died in 1871 to be succeeded by his son Jiwan Singh who married to Bachittar Kaur, daughter of Maharaja Mahendar Singh of Patiala.

The territories of Shaheed Misl were situated in the districts of Ambala, Bhatinda and Ferozepur. They included important places such as Ajrana, Ambi, Atari, Dadu, Damdama, Dharampura, Fatehgarh, Jharoli, Kesri, Kewal Khari, Majri, Pakka, Shahzadpur (43 villages worth Rs. 72,000 annually), Talokewala, Tangaur, Tihman.

## VII. Bhangi Misl

The most important Misl on the north-west of the river Sutlej was the Bhangi Misl. The founder of this Misl, Chhaja Singh was a resident of village Panjwar, 9 kilometers away from Amritsar. He took Pahul from Guru Gobind Singh and fought in many battles under him. He also served Banda Singh Bahadur. He was a devout Sikh and spared no pains to spread Guru's gospel. After the martyrdom of Banda Singh Bahadur, he administered Pahul to his three relations named Bhim Singh, Malla Singh and Jagat Singh, who in course of time became his great admirers. All these four cooperated with one another for purpose of leading expeditions against the tyrannical Mughal government of the day. They were also joined in their projects by Mihan Singh of Choupal, Gurbakhsh Singh a Sidhu Jat of Roranwala, Agar Singh Khangrora and Sawan Singh who all became zealous Sikhs of the Guru receiving Pahul from Chajja Singh.

Since the members of the Misl were suffering from addiction to drink made from Bhang or hemp, the Misl began to be called as Bhangi Misl.

### *Bhim Singh*

When Chajja Singh died, Bhim Singh succeeded to the chieftainship of the Misl. He organised it and after Nadir Shah's invasion in 1739 recruited a large number of soldiers to establish himself as one of the powerful Sikh leaders of the Sikhs. On the death of Zakariya Khan in 1745, Bhim Singh's band emerged one of the twenty-five bands. It is often believed that the name 'Bhangi' originated with Bhim Singh who had great weakness for Bhang beverage. But this view is not correct because contemporary and semi-contemporary historical evidences do not testify to it. The fact

seems to be that since during Bhim Singh's period, the consumption of Bhang-drink became more extensive, the name Bhangi also began to be used on a larger scale. So far as its origination is concerned, that definitely took place in the period of Chajja Singh.

In disposition, Bhim Singh was arrogant, proud and unduly assertive. His followers called him 'Balbash' (hot headed). Bhim Singh did not relish it and hence begged his people to drop this suffix attached with his name. They acceded to his request but on the condition that he would stand a feast to them. It is said that he himself pounded the hemp, prepared the drink and served it to his followers.

### *Hari Singh*

On the death of Bhim Singh, his nephew and adopted son Hari Singh became chief of the Bhangi Misl. His father Bhoop Singh was a land lord of the village Patch near Wadni. It was under his leadership that the Misl rose to eminence. S.M. Latif writes, "He had all the spirit of a daring, free-booting chief. He organised a large band of robbers, with which he over-ran the country, destroying and plundering the towns and villages. Not only did the Misl increase in numerical strength under him, but its daring exploits, often attended with rich booty, made it the wealthiest of the Misls. The fighting strength of the Bhangi Misl about this time was 20,000 men who were distributed over various portions of the country."

Hari Singh made the village Gilwali in Amritsar district as his headquarter wherefrom he started his campaigns of conquests. He conquered Sialkot, Kariala, Veerowal and extended his ravages to Jhang and Chiniot. He also made war on the Abdali King Ahmad Shah. In the year 1762 he fell on Kot Khwaja Sayyad, two miles from Lahore, where Khwaja Ubaid, the Afghan governor of Lahore, had collected a large number of majazires.

In 1764 he advanced towards Multan. Having plundered Bahawalpur, he thoroughly ravaged Multan. He crossed over river Indus and realised tribute from the Baloch chiefs in the districts of Muzaffargarh, Dera Ghazi Khan and Dera Ismail Khan. while returning he exacted tributes from the local chiefs of Pind Dadan Khan region. Farther on his way, he reduced Jhang, Chiniot and Sialkot. After this, he sacked Jammu and made Ranjit Dev his tributary. On the Jamuna, Rai Singh Bhangi and Bhagat Singh

Karorsinghia harassed the old Najib-ud-Daula, who had arrived to check the progress of the Sikh chiefs through the aid of the combined forces of Rohillas and Marathas in which he would probably had succeeded, had not his allies at this critical moment, put an end to his project.

Hari Singh displayed unique courage in the second holocaust (February 5, 1762). In 1763 he in combination with Kanhyias and Ramgarhias attacked and destroyed Kasur. The most important chiefs serving under Hari Singh were Gujjar Singh, Lehna Singh, Mokha Singh, Bhag Singh Hallowalia, Rae Singh of Jagadhari, Sher Singh of Buriya, Sudh Singh Dodia, Sahib Singh and Tara Singh Sialkotia and Gurbakhsh Singh Roranwala. His annual income was about 15 lakh.

In March, 1765, Hari Singh along with other chieftains of Dal Khalsa, marched upon Patiala to punish Ala Singh for recognising Ahmad Shah Abdali as his suzerain lord. In the battle he was killed, to the great relief both of Ala Singh and Jassa Singh Ahluwalia who according to Lepel Griffin felt jealous of his power. In this way through different plans of conquests, Hari Singh enhanced the power of the Bhangi Misl making it the strongest of all the Misls.

### *Jhanda Singh*

Hari Singh had two wives by one of whom, the daughter of Chaudhari Mula of village Panjwar near Tarn Taran, he had two sons, Jhanda Singh and Ganga Singh and by the other Charat Singh, Diwan Singh and Desa Singh. Jhanda Singh succeeded his father in the leadership of the confederacy.

Under Jhanda Singh, the Misl reached the zenith of its power. In A.D. 1766, he led an expedition against Multan and the chief of Bahawalpur. A battle was fought on the banks of the Sutlej with no decisive results and at long last a treaty was concluded between them and the invaders by which Jhanda Singh was acknowledged as the lord of the territories upto Pak Pattan.

In 1767 he built a fort behind the Loon Mandi in Amritsar which was long known as Qila Bhangian or the fort of the Bhangis.<sup>1</sup>

Jhanda Singh next (1771) directed his attention towards the Pathan colony of Kasur which he subdued in spite of stout resistance put up by Hamid Khan and Usman Khan. The Pathans

1. Dr. H.R. Gupta says that the fort was built by Hari Singh which is not correct.

promised not to kill cows and not to maltreat their Hindu subjects and to pay tribute in addition to a fine of four lakhs of rupees. Then he despatched Majha Singh, one of his commanders towards Bahawalpur but he was repulsed by the combined forces of Multan and Bahawalpur.

The following year, however, a quarrel arose between the successive governors of Multan and one of them, Sharif Beg Taklu invited Jhanda Singh to his aid. The Sikh chief welcomed the opportunity and hastened to Multan accompanied by Lehna Singh and other leading chiefs of his Misl. Shuja Khan, an erstwhile governor who burned with the desire to recover Multan for himself and his allies. The Daudpotras were defeated and Multan was taken and retained by the Sikhs, much to the disappointment of Sharif Beg Taklu.

The same year Multan was divided between Jhanda Singh and Lehna Singh who appointed one Diwan Singh as Kiladar and garrisoned the place with their own troops. Sharif Beg fled to Khaibar where he died shortly after.

He then proceeded to Rasul Nagar (later known as Ram Nagar) where he recovered the famous Zamzama, popularly known as Bhangī gun, from the Chathas and carried it to Amritsar. After this, he marched on Jammu at the head of a large army, Ranjit Dev the ruler of Jammu accepted the suzerainty of the Misl and paid the arrears of tribute.

He next visited Amritsar where he built a brick fort which he named the Bhangī Qila (the ruins of which are still to be seen behind the Loon Mandi). His brother Ganda Singh after the capture of Multan collected tributes from the Nawab of Bahawalpur and the chief of Mankera and occupied the area lying between Salt range and the river Chenab.

After this, Jhanda Singh fought against the combined forces of Jai Singh Kanhiya, Hakikat Singh Kanhiya and Charat Singh Sukarchakia. This event took place in 1774. Ranjit Dev, the ruler of Jammu wanted to dispossess his eldest son, Brij Raj Dev from succession after his death in favour of his youngest son, Mian Dalel. Charat Singh and Jai Singh supported Brij Raj Dev while Ranjit Dev's cause was championed by Jhanda Singh and some other hill chiefs. The two opposing parties met on the Basanti river to fight out the issue. But before the decision could be reached, Charat Singh was killed by the bursting of his own matchlock. At one time the Bhangis appeared likely to win the day but the death of Jhanda Singh who was shot dead by a Mazahabi Sikh, one of his own

followers who had been bribed to do so by Jai Singh, decided the contest in favour of Kanhiya Misl. Ranjit Dev patched up peace with his son as well as with Jai Singh Kanhiya by paying him a sum of one lakh and a quarter rupees.

### *Ganda Singh*

After the assassination of Jhanda Singh, Ganda Singh brother of the deceased, was unanimously appointed to the leadership of the Misl. He collected a large number of workmen, and completed the projects which had been commenced by his brother at Amritsar. He strengthened the Bhangi fort and enlarged and beautified the city with many beautiful edifices. The treachery of the Kanhyias which had brought about the death of his elder brother rankled in the mind of Ganda Singh. His ire received a fillip when Jausan, the widow of one Bhangi Sardar Nodh Singh married her daughter to Tara Singh, brother of Hakikat Singh Kanhiya and gave Pathankot in dowry to his son-in-law. Since Pathankot had been bestowed on Nodh Singh by Jhanda Singh, he got annoyed at its delivery to the one who was opposed to him. Not only this, Tara Singh threw all scruples to wind and murdered his wife and his mother-in-law apprehending that the latter might not change her mind under pressure from Bhangi Sardars. This thing further intensified his rage. He, therefore, demanded restitution of Pathankot which, in his reckoning, rightfully belonged to him. The Kanhyias refused to oblige him and insisted upon holding it as their rightful possession.

Thereupon Ganda Singh, Gujjar Singh, Lehna Singh, Bhag Singh Chamyari, Pir Muhammad Khan Chatha, Ranjit Dev of Jammu and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, all advanced against the united forces of Kanhyias, Sukarchakias and Ahluwalias. Ganda Singh carried Zamzama gun with him.

The two armies met at Sunder Chak near village Awankha in pargana Dina Nagar, 25 km south of Pathankot and fought for many days. After ten days of continuous fighting heavy rains began which lasted for one month and a half. During the period a calamity fell upon the Bhangis. Ganda Singh was taken seriously ill and died there.<sup>1</sup>

---

1. According to Giani Gian Singh, an arrow of Hakikat Singh Kanhiya killed him.

*Charat Singh*

Ganda Singh's son being a minor, his stepbrother Charat Singh assumed the command of Bhangi forces and continued fighting. As ill luck would have it, the new chief also lost his life in one of the engagements.

*Desa Singh*

The Bhangis then elected Desa Singh, the minor son of Ganda Singh who had been passed over owing to his tender years. The Misl now got out of control because of the imbecility and cowardice of its leader. Many Sardars became independent. The tribute from Jhang was stopped and Multan was lost soon after. Muzaffer Khan, the son of Shuja Khan, assisted by his ally, the Bahawalpur chief, made an attempt to recover Multan in A.D. 1777. He was, however, repulsed by Diwan Singh the governor of Jhanda Singh.

And now a greater calamity was awaiting the Sikhs. Timur Shah, son and successor of Ahmad Shah Abdali, made up his mind to recover his lost territories in the Punjab. His attempt failed because his general Faizullah turned seditious. In the second attempt (1779-80) he achieved considerable success. His general Zaqi Durrani led a chosen force of 18000 men consisting of Qizalbash, Yusafzeis and Durranis to attack the Sikhs who had taken shelter in the fort of Rohtas. After a bloody fight, the Sikhs gave way. About 3000 of Sikhs were killed in the battle, while 2000 were drowned in their attempt to cross the river. After this victory, Timur Shah directed his forces to capture Multan. In the process, the Afghan forces led a severe attack upon the Sikhs near Multan. The Sikhs left their positions and suffered very heavy casualties. After this the Sikhs took up their positions in the fort of Multan and closed the city gates. Early in January 1780, Timur's forces laid siege to town of Multan. Just then Jassa Singh, Gujjar Singh, Hakikat Singh, Lehna Singh, Bhanga Singh and other Sikh chiefs from Lahore at the head of 10000 horsemen marched for the relief of Multan against the Afghan forces. They fought a severe battle against the Afghan forces on 8th February, 1780 from morning till afternoon but ultimately they were defeated and had to flee back towards Lahore. After this, Multan was occupied. The Sikh army consisting of 7000 horse capitulated. They were allowed to depart for their homes in safety fully armed and in possession



of their belongings. Muzaffer Khan was appointed governor of Multan at the head of 20000 horse; whilst Shujat Khan, Azam Khan and several other Afghan chiefs were appointed to assist him to consolidate and operate the administration of the province. Timur Shah also subdued Bahawal Khan the Abassi chief of Bahawalpur.<sup>1</sup> After this incident the decline that had started earlier became more pronounced. Even then, Desa Singh continued to receive revenue to the tune of fifty thousand rupees annually from the Sials.

The greatest enemy of Desa Singh was Mahan Singh Sukarchakia. Both were often engaged in mutual warfare. Many of his parganas were seized by Mahan Singh. Desa Singh was killed in 1782 in an engagement with Mahan Singh at Chiniot. Mahan Singh expelled the Bhangi military posts from Pind Bhattan, Sahiwal, Isa Khel, Musa Khel and Jhang. The total span of the rule of Desa Singh was eight years.

### *Gulab Singh*

Desa Singh was succeeded by his minor son Gulab Singh. He mostly remained at Amritsar. He did his best to enlarge and beautify the city of Amritsar. He also brought Kasur, the Pathan colony under his subjection but he failed to keep it in that condition for long, as its chiefs Qutab-ud-Din Khan and Nizam-ud-Din Khan soon re-asserted their independence. Gulab Singh, because of his inefficiency, sensual character, and feebleness of mind soon alienated the troops from him. Many of his parganas were seized by his subordinate chiefs. According to Dr. H.R. Gupta, he was left with only six parganas of Amritsar, Chubal, Kohli, Majitha, Naushehra and a part of Sirhali. At the time of Timur's third rumoured invasion in 1796-97 he could not inspire his people of Amritsar many of whom left in panic.

At the fall of Lahore into the hands of Ranjit Singh, Gulab Singh smelt danger and formed a confederacy of different chiefs, such as Sahib Singh Bhangi, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and Nizam-ud-Din Khan of Kasur.

The troops of these allied chiefs marched to Bhasin, a village which lay a few kms east of Lahore. Ranjit Singh also made preparations and marched along with his forces to meet the enemy.

At Bhasin, the two contending parties lay encamped facing each other for about two months. But neither of them dared take

1. Sayyad Muhammad Latif, op. cit., p. 299.

the initiative till at last Gulab Singh died suddenly of excessive drinking and his friends retired yielding a bloodless victory to Ranjit Singh. This happened in A.D. 1800.

### *Gurdit Singh*

He was succeeded to the chieftainship by his ten year old son Gurdit Singh. Being young, he and his mother Mai Sukhan conducted the affairs of the state. In 1805, Ranjit Singh invaded and occupied the city of Amritsar and within a few years after this, the rest of the Bhangi territories were also absorbed by him.

### *Lehna Singh and Gujjar Singh*

As it has been mentioned elsewhere, sometimes Misdars rose to such heights that they were considered equal to Sardars. Even at that stage, there existed no difference between Sardars and Misdars except that the Misdars paid respect to the Sardars. In the history of Bhangi Misl, some of the Misdars acquired so much prominence and their deeds were so much glaring that it is in the fitness of things that their achievements should be recorded separately. Two such Misdars were Lehna Singh and Gujjar Singh.

The grandfather of Lehna Singh was an ordinary Jat of Sadowala. Being reduced to extremely adverse circumstances, he went to Mastipur near Kartarpur and was adopted there by a carpenter as his son. A son named Dargaha was born to him there and Lehna Singh was the son of this Dargaha.

Lehna Singh was quite a boy when he ran away from home and reaching the village Aroranwala near Attari entered into service with Sardar Gurbakhsh Singh who was one of the principal Misdars of Hari Singh Bhangi. Gurbakhsh Singh had no son and adopted Lehna Singh as the one. Gujjar Singh, the other leader of this branch, was a grandson of Sardar Gurbakhsh Singh, being his daughter's son.

At the death of Sardar Gurbakhsh Singh, a quarrel arose between Gujjar Singh and Lehna Singh but after some fighting they came to terms and divided the estates of the late Sardar half and half.

These two Sardars, in due course of time, grew so powerful that they in conjunction with Sobha Singh took Lahore, where they ruled with some inter-missions until their death (1765).

The three joint governors of Lahore gave a very good account of themselves as administrators—so much so that two years later,

when Ahmad Shah Abdali made his descent into the Punjab and three Sardars fled from Lahore, the citizens of Lahore submitted petition to the invader to confirm them as the Lahore governors in his own behalf. The Durrani chief actually invited these Sardars to come back but they rejected his offer and re-occupied the city after the Shah retired to his country.

For thirty years following these events, the joint governors of Lahore reigned in peace, till the invasion of India by Shah Zaman who had succeeded to Kabul throne in 1793.

In December 1793, Shah Zaman marched at the head of a large force and reached as far as Hasan Abdal unopposed. From there he sent Bahadur Khan and Ahmad Khan, the two of his generals, to march with their 7000 horse and conquer the Chaj Doab. His plans, however, were frustrated by a fresh disturbance at Herat caused by his brother Mahmud and he was compelled to return to his country. Suffice it to say that his troops under Ahmad Khan Shahanchi were defeated and put to flight by the Sikhs.

In December 1795 Shah Zaman marched once again into the Punjab. But this time too, he had to go back in view of the threat of Agha Muhammad Khan, the Persian King.

Shortly after this, the situation in India took a favourable turn for Shah Zaman. The princes of upper India, being hard-pressed by the English and the Marathas, had entered into negotiations with Zaman Shah to bring about another Durrani invasion of India. Thus, Ghulam Muhammad, the defeated usurper of Rohil Khand and the agents of Nawab Asif-ud-Daula, the Oudh Wazir, crossed the Punjab in 1795-96 to urge upon his majesty the necessity of an invasion. They assured him that in his venture, he would get full support from the entire mass of the Indian Muslims. Thus encouraged, the Shah started his march at the end of November, 1796. His army forded the Chenab and marched to Shahdara on the banks of the river Ravi. From this place, he despatched his grand Wazir Hafiz Sher Muhammad Khan to Lahore at the head of twenty thousand troops to occupy Lahore. Before his arrival Lehna Singh and Sobha Singh, the joint governors of Lahore, delivered the keys of the citadel to Mian Shah Cheragh, a descendant of the famous saint Abdul Qadir Jilani, and one of the leading Muhammadans of the city and retired. The capital of the Punjab thus fell into Shah's hands unopposed. This happened on the 3rd of January 1797.

After the occupation of Lahore the Shah decided to chastise

the Sikhs for their violent activities and sent parties in different directions to this effect. Since the time had changed and the Sikh power was in the ascendant, he thought it fit to adopt a mixed policy of conciliation and threats. It was on account of this that besides sending parties from here in all directions to apprehend the Sikhs, he offered to pardon those who paid homage to him at Lahore. As a result of this, some Sikh chiefs of the Punjab made their submission to him. In the meanwhile, Tippu Sultan, Sindhia and the Rohillas established their contracts with the Shah. The Muslims all over India rejoined at the prospects of restoration of the Muslim rule in the country. The atmosphere was charged with high hopes.

How elusive these hopes were, appeared soon after. Intelligence was received of the rebellion of his brother Mahmud at Herat and Shah was compelled to retire to his own country leaving behind Ahmad Khan Barakzei, as incharge of the country between the Jhelum and the Sind.

Soon after the departure of the Durrani chief, the joint governors re-occupied the city. But in the same year (1797) Lehna Singh and Sobha Singh died. Lehna Singh was succeeded by his imbecile son, Chet Singh, and Sobha Singh by his son Mohar Singh who was no better than Chet Singh. The citizens of Lahore met together, and to escape the unjust and tyrannical rule of the joint governors, wrote an application to Ranjit Singh inviting him to occupy the city. Ranjit Singh accepted the offer and occupied the city of Lahore, the traditional capital of the Punjab. This happened in the month of July, 1799.

### *Gujjar Singh*

Gujjar Singh was the son of Natha Singh, a poor cultivator and a Sandhu Jat of village Bhuri Asal also called Borashal situated near Khem Karan. In his teens he went to his maternal uncle Gurbakhsh Singh Bhangi of village Roranwala 2 km from Attari. He took Pahul from him and joined his band. Gradually he won over Gurbakhsh Singh and made him the head of his band. He captured Amargarh and began to reside there. He united his band to the army of Hari Singh Bhangi, the head of Bhangi Misl.

Gurbakhsh Singh had no son. He adopted Lehna Singh as a son. On Gurbakhsh Singh's death Gujjar Singh claimed the whole estate and property of the deceased, but after some fighting they came to terms and divided the estates of the late Sardar half and

half. In 1765, he in conjunction with Lehna Singh and Sobha Singh occupied Lahore.

Gujjar Singh exercised his suzerainty over the eastern part of Lahore lying outside its walls. Sobha Singh seized Niaz Beg village while Lehna Singh took possession of the city and its fort.

Gujjar Singh's possession was almost a jungle very sparsely populated. He invited the people to live there. He sank forty wells to assure supply of water to them. He also constructed 15 shops and 150 houses. A mosque was also built for his Muslim subjects.

Gujjar Singh was not content with the occupation of the aforesaid portion of Lahore city. He, therefore, left his eldest son Sukha Singh at Lahore and himself marched to the north west at the head of a strong force. He seized Eminabad, Wazirabad, Chakrali, Sodhra. The pargana of Sodhra contained Begowala Bhopalwala, Havanwala, Mitranwali and Sohowala. In all he captured 150 villages in Gujranwala district. In December 1765, he along with Charat Singh Sukarchakia marched upon Gujrat. Sultan Muqarrab Khan, the head of Gakhar tribe inhabiting the region between Chenab and Indus rivers offered tough resistance but he had to save his life by escaping from the fort of Gujrat in which he had shut himself up after suffering defeat outside it.

Even in his escape he could not find safety. He was surrounded just one and a half km from Gujrat by the Sikh army. Flabbergasted Muqarrab Khan rode an elephant and descended into a fast flowing rivulet adjacent to the village of Gheduwal. When the elephant reached the other bank there was no Muqarrab Khan on its howdah. According to Hari Ram Gupta, he clandestinely rode a horse and dashed on till he reached the bank of the river Jhelum. There he was captured and put to death by his rival Gakhar chief Himmat Khan of Domeli, 30 km to the west of river Jhelum.

According to Ganesh Das Wadehra, the Sikhs first plundered the entire camp of Muqarrab Khan, then Gujrat city. The people were struck with terror. They fled away to Jalalpur, Shadipur, Akhnoor and other places far and near. The Waraich Jats who held 170 villages in Gujrat district and 41 villages in Gujranwala submitted quietly.

The Chaj Doab was divided between two Sardars. Gujjar Singh's territory extended from river Jhelum to Waso Sohawa. Charat Singh's share was from Kunjah to Miani. The most important

places belonging to Gujjar Singh in the Chaj Doab were Gujrat, Jalalpur and Islamgarh.

After the conquest of Gujrat, Gujjar Singh turned his attention towards the Chibs who held fifty villages in Gujrat district, besides possessing the tract of Khari Kharyali stretching from the forts of Mangla and Naushehra on river Jhelum in the hilly region upto the Chenab. He tried to subdue them but failed in his mission. The Chibs, however, undertook not to create disturbances. About the same time he reduced to subjection the Muslim hilly states of lower Kashmir region. He defeated Sulaiman Khan of Bhimber and made him his tributary. Mirpur Kotli and Poonch fell afterwards. These successes prompted Gujjar Singh to conquer the Kashmir valley. He made an attack on the governor of Kashmir, but suffered a defeat because his soldiers had no experience to fight at high altitude. Gujjar Singh returned to Gujrat with great difficulty.

In 1766-67 Ahmad Shah Abdali invaded Punjab for the eighth time. Gujjar Singh along with other Sardars gave Abdali a tough time. On January 17, 1767 the Durrani commander-in-chief Jahan Khan reached Amritsar at the head of 15000 troops. Gujjar Singh, Charat Singh and Hira Singh opposed him and killed at least six thousand Afghan soldiers. This disquieting news reached Abdali when he was resting at Jalalabad on the bank of river Beas. Leaving his baggage there, he rushed to help Jahan Khan. The Sikhs showed remarkable agility. They lost no time to take possession of the Abdali's baggage.

Ranjit Dev of Jammu apprehending some harm from Abdali, sent tribute to him understandably to pledge his loyalty. Gujjar Singh and Jhanda Singh who did not like his allegiance to Abdali led an expedition to Jammu, and imposed a fine on the Raja.

In the summer of 1767, Gujjar Singh and Charat Singh conquered Jhelum and Rohtas. Both these places came in possession of Charat Singh. A little after Sultan Mukarram Khan of Perwala, Kar Ullah Khan of Dhani and Masur Khan of Gheb submitted to Gujjar Singh. All these chiefs belonged to Gakhar Tribe.

After this, he alongwith his son Sahib Singh captured Rawalpindi, an insignificant place in those days containing a few huts of Rawal Hindu mendicants but strategically very important being situated at the junction of two highways from Kabul to Lahore and from Kabul to Kashmir. Rawalpindi area was inhabited by hardy and warlike people such as Awans, Dhinds and Gulers.



The victory over them greatly enhanced the prestige of Gujjar Singh. Gujjar Singh gave the charge of Rawalpindi to Milkha Singh Thepuria. He occupied Hasan Abdal 46 km from Rawalpindi and entrusted it to Kale Khan Bhangi. He also went to Attock 53 km from Hasan Abdal and assigned the area between Hasan Abdal and Attock to Ram Singh Pada. Tappa Tarali and Qila Ratala were given to Charat Singh (brother of Gujjar Singh). Kalra and Pothohar were assigned to Jodh Singh Atariwala.

Gujjar Singh took about twelve years to subjugate north western area of the Punjab. The Awans, Dalals, Ghebas, Guleras, Janjuas, Jedras, Khatra, Runials and Tarkhels of the Jhelum and Rawalpindi districts and the Salt Range all gave way before him. In this difficult task, he was assisted by Charat Singh Sukarchakia. By 1770, the Gakhars were completely subdued. In the pargana of Fatehpur Baorah, the Gakhars owned 669 villages. Out of these 192 villages were granted by Mokha Singh deputy of Gujjar Singh in Jagir to the most notable tribes. These estates called Mushakhsa were subject only to a trifling tribute.

For the defence of the city of Amritsar, Gujjar Singh laid the foundation of Qila Gujjar Singh. Charat Singh Sukarchakia also built a fort to the north of Darbar Sahib, while that of Jassa Singh Ramgarhia lay to the east and that of the Bhangis to the south.

The last days of Gujjar Singh were full of shocks. His eldest son Sukha Singh who had been assigned Lahore was married to the daughter of Bhag Singh Hallowala. His second son lived at Gujrat and was married to the sister of Mahan Singh in 1774. Fateh Singh managed the ancestral estate Rangarh, 30 km from Amritsar towards Lahore. Of the three brothers Sahib Singh was the most ambitious and most selfish and had no filial and brotherly considerations.

As long as Charat Singh lived there were perfect cordiality between the two Misls. But after his death in (1774) his son and successor Mahan Singh grew jealous of Gujjar Singh's power. Unable to face the Bhangis in the field, he resorted to the cunning. He inveigled upon Sahib Singh to set himself up as an independent chief. Sahib Singh was taken in and started defying his father—so much so that he led an expedition to snatch Lahore from Sukha Singh. In the grim battle that took place in the suburb of Lahore, Sukha Singh was killed. Gujjar Singh was deeply hurt and angered. He advanced upon Gujrat to punish Sahib Singh. After some fighting Sahib Singh fled to Islamgarh. At this moment Mahan

Singh succeeded in cajoling Gujjar Singh to forgive his son. Gujjar Singh allowed Sahib Singh to remain at Gujrat.

After some time, Mahan Singh attacked Rasul Nagar. Ahmad Khan Chatha resisted but ultimately had to escape into Gujjar Singh's camp to save his life. Sahib Singh very cleverly made the Chatha chief over to Mahan Singh's men against the wishes of his father who had already refused to hand him over to Mahan Singh. Gujjar Singh felt much perturbed at the perfidy of Sahib Singh. He reprimanded Sahib Singh, who instead of feeling remorse openly insulted him. This plunged Gujjar Singh into the abyss of sorrow and despair. He returned to Lahore where he died a broken-hearted man. Khushwaqt Rai places his death in 1788. Ganesh Das Wadehra and Muhammad Latif concur with him. In our computation, he expired early in 1780.

Gujjar Singh was a good soldier, a great general, an adept strategist, a strong and skilled administrator. He was the first to establish Sikh supremacy at Rawalpindi and Bhimber. He maintained peace and order in his territory and greatly encouraged agriculture and industry.

### **VIII. Kanhiya Misl**

The founder of this Misl was Jai Singh, a Sandhu Jat who belonged to the village Kanha which was situated 15 miles east of Lahore and which gave the Misl the name it bears. His father named Khushali was a poor man but was fortunate in having three brave sons Jai Singh, Jhanda Singh and Singha. When Jai Singh reached youthhood, he went to Nawab Kapur Singh who had by this time established himself as an acknowledged and most respected leader of the Khalsa and like many others had the satisfaction of having been initiated into the Khalsa Brotherhood by him.

After receiving Pahul, Jai Singh joined Dal Khalsa and within a short time established his reputation as a man suffused with adventurous spirit and ever-sprawling ambition. Jai Singh and his brother, Jhanda Singh, took service with Nawab Kapur Singh but when the Nawab died, both the brothers went to Sohian, a village nine miles from Amritsar, where Jai Singh had married. Here Jai Singh got together nearly four hundred horsemen and began to possess himself of the neighbouring countries. Four brothers Hakikat Singh, Mehtab Singh, Jiwan Singh and Tara Singh who belonged to village Jhulke and developed fondness for him for

his qualities willingly extended their cooperation to him in many of his ventures.

Five years later in 1754 Jhanda Singh, the brother of Jai Singh, was killed in a fight with Nidhan Singh Randhawa at Rawalkot. Jai Singh succeeded to his brother's share in the estate, marrying his widow, Mai Desan, by the rite of *Chadar pauna*. Jai Singh became a powerful chief. He occupied Nag, Mukerian, Hajipur, Karrot, Pathankot, Dharam Kot, Sujanpur, et al.<sup>1</sup> Later in 1754, he accompanied by Charat Singh Sukarchakia entered Lahore inside Shah Almi Gate one dark evening, in the guise of a Muslim and dispossessed the rich merchants and jewellers of their money and valuables.

In 1759, Desan, the wife of Jai Singh, gave birth to a son named Gurbakhsh Singh who was betrothed at the age of seven and married at nine to Sadā Kaur, daughter of Dasondha Singh (Dhaliwal) of Alkowala.<sup>2</sup> Jai Singh was first married to the daughter of Hamir Singh of Nabha.

Just after the birth of his son, Jai Singh arranged the marriage of Jaimal Singh, the son of his associate and a very important leader of a section of his Misl with Sahib Kaur, the daughter of Maharaja Amar Singh of Patiala.

After Ahmad Shah Abdali's retirement from the Punjab in 1763, the Kanhiya Sardars allied with Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. Hari Singh Bhangi and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia attacked the Pathan town of Kasur.

#### *Plunder of Kasur—A Response to Brahmin's Request*

According to Bute Shah, a Brahmin woman was taken away by the Afghans of Kasur and was forcibly taken in wed-lock by one of them. Awfully anguished and agonised, the Brahmins of Kasur came to Amritsar and appeared at Sri Akal Takhat Sahib, where Dal Khalsa was in conference. The heart-rending story of the Brahmins shook the Sardars including Jai Singh, Hakikat Singh, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and Bhangi Sardars from head to foot. Their Sikh spirit smarted and they at once marched to Kasur—even as they were advised by some that at this juncture when the Khalsa had not yet fully recovered from the loss they had been made to suffer in February 1762, it would

1. Ahmad Shah Batalia, op. cit., p. 22.

2. Some writers think that Dasondha Singh Dhaliwal belonged to the village of Rauke Kalan in the present Moga tehsil of Moga District.

be hazardous to undertake any campaign. Kasur was laid siege to and its forts fell before the onslaught of the Sikhs. The chief of Kasur, Ghulam Muhiy-ud-Din Khan, was also shot dead in the course of fighting. The Brahmin woman was restored to her husband and the Afghans of Kasur were made to pay war indemnity amounting to four lakh rupees. The Sikhs got huge booty from Kasur.

According to Ahmad Shah, the allies plundered the town and the booty including cash, gold and silver utensils, various kinds of pearls and precious stones, very costly silk and peshmina clothes and valuable rings et al. Jai Singh Kanhiya's share comprised of gold, silver and emeralds and highly studded ornaments which were carried with difficulty by four strong and sturdy persons. Similarly the Ramgarhias also received a rich share of the booty. It is said that most of the booty was buried in the jungle near the village of Begowal.<sup>1</sup>

Jai Singh participated in the battle in which Zain Khan was defeated and killed in January 1764. In 1765 Qazi Nur Muhammad wrote in his *Jangnama* that Jai Singh Kanhiya had extended his territory upto Namol lying in the southern parts of Jammu. He worked in collaboration with Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and both of them shared the territory of Batala.<sup>2</sup>

After this, he took Garota, Haripur, Nurpur, Datarpur and Saipah levying tribute from the Rajas of these hill states. He also took Mukerian reducing the Swan rulers of the place to subjection after a desperate struggle and great slaughter.

### *Kangra Affair*

In 1774 the Muhammadan Nawab Saif Ali Khan expired. He was in charge of the hill affairs and resided in the fort of Kangra which the Mughals had occupied to exercise their control over the hill states of the region. The Kangra state, except the fort of Kangra, was allowed to remain in the hands of hereditary rulers. During the disturbances caused by Ahmad Shah Abdali's invasion, Ghamand Chand, the ruler of Kangra state, had risen to power. His grandson Raja Sansar Chand began to entertain ambition to be entirely independent, and to this purpose, he aspired for retrieving the fort of Kangra. He attacked Saif Ali Khan quite a

1. Ahmad Shah Batalia, as an Appendix to the first Daftar of Sohan Lal Suri's *Umdat-ut-Twarikh*.

2. Qazi Nur Muhammad, *Jang Nama*, p. 59 (edited by Dr. Ganda Singh).

number of times but was met with failure. Even when he made an attack immediately after the death of its Mughal governor in 1784, he did not make much headway. Desperate in his resolve to gain Kangra fort, he implored Jai Singh for help. Jai Singh sent his handsome and very courageous son at the head of a large force. In the process, he realised that Kangra Fort held the key to be the master of the hill states of this region. He, through his clever diplomacy, won over Jiwan, the son of Saif Ali Khan who surrendered to Gurbakhsh Singh without a fight. Gurbakhsh Singh instead of handing over to Sansar Chand Katoch for whose help he had come, kept it for his Misl. With this addition to the already occupied area, Jai Singh became very powerful and influence-wielding. In the Kangra region, he became paramount. Earlier the hill states including those of Jasrota, Basholi and Jammu had been tributary to Hakikat Singh.

Now after occupying Kangra fort, Jai Singh became the sovereign lord of all the Rajas and Thakurs of the neighbouring states.

### *Jammu Imbroglia*

About the middle of the eighteenth century, Jammu was ruled by a very capable ruler named Ranjit Dev. In A.D. 1774, a quarrel broke out between Ranjit Dev and his eldest son Brij Raj Dev. The central issue of the contention was as to who should succeed to the throne of Jammu, Brij Raj Dev or his younger brother. Ranjit Dev wanted his youngest son to succeed him after his death, because in his reckoning, his elder son was not an appropriate choice to shoulder the responsibility because of his loose morals and lackadaisical disposition. Brij Raj Dev broke out in rebellion and invited Kanhiya Sardar, Jai Singh and Charat Singh Sukarchakia for his help. Ranjit Dev was obliged to seek help from Jhanda Singh and Ganda Singh Bhangis to whom he was a tributary. In the battle which lasted for twenty-two days, Charat Singh was killed by bursting of his own match-lock, thereby making the chances of victory brighter for Jhanda Singh. But the next day, Jhanda Singh was got killed by Jai Singh through a follower of the former who had been bribed by the latter.<sup>1</sup>

Awfully perplexed at the perfidy of Jai Singh, Ganda Singh returned to Amritsar. Ranjit Dev changed his mind and thought

1. Ahmad Shah Batalia, op. cit., p. 29;

Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-twarikh* II, p. 13.

it sagacious to buy peace by paying a handsome amount of one lakh and a quarter of rupees to Jai Singh who, on his part, stopped taking interest in the issue of succession which remained in flux as it was before he took the side of Brij Raj Dev.

The anguished Ganda Singh after a short pause regained his confidence and allied himself with Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and fought several battles with Jai Singh Kanhiya. Luckily for Jai Singh, he died in the battle of Dinanagar. Jai Singh, by a clever political overture leagued himself with Jassa Singh Ahluwalia in 1778, who had to settle his scores with Jassa Singh Ramgarhia. Both the Sardars succeeded in driving Jassa Singh Ramgarhia out of Trans-Sutlej region. Ranjit Dev died in April 1781. Brij Raj Dev succeeded him. Jai Singh and Hakikat Singh led an expedition to Jammu. Brij Raj Dev paid Jai Singh a huge sum of three lakhs as a tribute. Jai Singh kept the whole amount for himself and when he was asked by Hakikat Singh for his share, he told him to undertake another expedition to Jammu. Hakikat Singh offered to Mahan Singh to attack Jammu jointly because he apprehended that in case Mahan Singh was not taken into confidence he might incline towards Brij Raj Dev because both had exchanged turbans symbolising their brotherly relations. Mahan Singh accepted the offer. The day for the march upon Jammu was fixed in January 1784. Mahan Singh reached Jammu by a different route four days before the fixed day. He plundered Jammu for three days and nights, killing thousands of men. The booty secured was worth more than a crore. When Hakikat Singh reached Jammu, he found the city of Jammu in flames and in ruins. The treachery shocked him so much that he died of grief on his return to Fatehgarh, his headquarter.

#### *Ramgarhia Sardar was Driven out*

Jai Singh and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia had been friends but differences cropped up between them over sharing of the booty which they laid their hands upon while capturing Kasur. The differences accentuated as time rolled on. The conquest of Kot Kangra by Kanhyias lent still more poignancy to the mutual tension of the Kanhyias and Ramgarhias. On the question of Pathankot, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia supported the Bhangis against the Kanhyias. But in the battle that was fought at Dina Nagar, Kanhyias were able to win a victory.

Soon after the Kanhyias developed close relations with the chiefs of Ahluwalia and Bhangi Misl and all the three resolved to



crush the rising power of the Ramgarhias. About the year 1776, Gurbakhsh Singh Kanhiya, the son of Jai Singh attacked Batala which was at the time under charge of Malla Singh, the brother of Jassa Singh Ramgarhia. Malla Singh was disliked by his own people who assisted the invader with the result that Malla Singh had to flee.

After some time, Jassa Singh recovered Batala but he failed to recover Kalanaur which was now held by Jaimal Singh, son of Hakikat Singh, the deputy of Jai Singh Kanhiya.

The fight continued and ultimately the allies were successful in driving Jassa Singh Ramgarhia to the east of Sutlej.

### *Bitterness Between Jai Singh and Mahan Singh*

Shortly afterwards, Jai Singh picked up a quarrel with the Sukarchakias. The quarrel arose over the booty which Mahan Singh had acquired at Jammu and refused to share half of it with Hakikat Singh as per mutual understanding. Mahan Singh argued that booty was the fruit of his own labour and hence the demand of Kanhiya Sardar was unreasonable if not frivolous. Jai Singh was cut to quick and forthwith plundered Mahan Singh's territory laying waste the parganas of Mansurpur and Mandiala and seizing Chunian, Dipalpur and Raiwind, the territories in possession of Nakais who then were allies of Mahan Singh. He also attacked Jandiala whose chief was in alliance with Sukarchakia Sardar.

Frightened Mahan Singh rushed to Amritsar to tender apology to the anguished Kanhiya Sardar. He called upon him on the Diwali day (1784) and offered in all humility a tray full of delicious sweets. Jai Singh refused to mellow. He covered his face with piece of cloth, beckoning thereby that he had nothing but scorn for him.<sup>1</sup>

Not only this, he passed secret orders that Mahan Singh should not be allowed to leave Amritsar, and taken prisoner. Mahan Singh very adroitly but clandestinely left Amritsar and busied himself with forging measures to take revenge upon his old patron.

He called to his help Jassa Singh Ramgarhia who entertained grouse against Jai Singh for his role in driving him out of the trans-Sutlej region.

The co-operation of Sansar Chand, grandson of Ghamand Chand, chief of katoch who had been disappointed at the hands of Jai Singh in the Kot Kangra affair, was easily secured.

1. Bute Shah, op. cit., pp. 49-50.

Mahan Singh also won over Ghulam Ghous, the most prominent of the citizens of Batala by holding out promise of re-establishing him at Batala.

### *Fall of Batala*

Jai Singh called to his help, Gurbakhsh Singh Dula and sent him at the head of a force in the direction of the Sutlej, to prevent Jassa Singh near Patiala but he was killed and his army was routed. Various other skirmishes took place outside the walls of Amritsar between the Kanhyias and Mahan Singh without any decisive result.

At last the allied forces met the enemy at Randpura 13 km away from Achal and a severe fight took place between them and the Kanhyias (1785). Gurbakhsh Singh, the only son of Jai Singh, was killed in the battle by an arrow of a follower of Guru Sunder Das of Jandiala. The Kanhya soldiers fled in all directions. Jai Singh felt so heart-broken at the death of his son, that he burst into tears, emptied the quiver of its arrows and dismounted from his horse, and exposed himself to the enemy's fire. Such was the respect for the old veteran that none dared approach him in his grief and all quietly withdrew. The victorious troops then advanced Riarki and seized it.

From the fall of Batala may be reckoned the beginning of the decline of Kanhya confederacy. Pressed by the Ramgarhias and Sukarchakias, Jai Singh fled to Nurpur with Jaimal Singh and Tara Singh. His daughter-in-law, Sada Kaur, the widow of Gurbakhsh Singh who had remained behind, had also to effect her escape barefooted through fear of the enemy and went to Sohian. The city was taken possession of by Jassa Singh Ramgarhia who put Bhag Singh and Hakikat Singh in charge of it. The Ramgarhia chief Jassa Singh had his possessions restored to himself.

### *Kangra Affair—Alliance with Mahan Singh*

Kangra still remained tributary to Jai Singh. As Sansar Chand was burning with the desire of getting its possession, he declared war on Jai Singh. He fell on Hajipur and seized the whole country between that town and the hills including Mukerian. The fort of Atalgarh was gallantly defeated by a slave girl of the Kanhya Sardar who, for four months, successfully repulsed the attacks of the enemy, and held the place for her master.

This heroine constrained Sansar Chand to raise the siege. War between Sansar Chand and Jai Singh was carried on for a period of three years when Sada Kaur, the widow of Gurbakhsh Singh

and an enterprising lady, devised a plan for securing the alliance of the new Sukarchakia chief by a marriage tie. Accordingly, she betrothed her daughter Mehtab Kaur to Ranjit Singh, the son of Mahan Singh, the leader of the Sukarchakia Misl. She proceeded to Jawalamukhi and the negotiations between her and Raj Kaur, wife of Mahan Singh were brought to a conclusion at that place.

Sansar Chand, however, eagerly and persistently demanded Kot Kangra, and the matter having been referred to arbitration, it was finally decided that Jai Singh should abandon Kot Kangra, and Sansar Chand on his part, vacate Hajipur and Mukerian.

Sansar Chand entered into an agreement to help the Kanhyias against the Ramgarhias in case of a war.

Shortly after, Jai Singh, having now joined by Mahan Singh, Sansar Chand and the Rajas of Nurpur and Chamba marched against Batala and besieged it. The siege had to be raised after 21 days of fighting. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia had made his position so strong in the city that he could not be dislodged and Batala remained in an undisturbed possession of the Ramgarhia chief.

The friendship between Jai Singh and Mahan Singh went on unabated. Mahan Singh died in A.D. 1792. His death was greatly lamented by his old ally Jai Singh who, four years afterwards, gave his grand-daughter Mehtab Kaur in marriage to Ranjit Singh, the son of the deceased. The nuptials were performed at Batala with great pomp and show.

#### *Sada Kaur succeeded to Sardari*

Jai Singh died soon after i.e. in A.D. 1790 leaving two sons, Nidhan Singh and Bhag Singh who were both unfit to govern the Misl. Naturally, his daughter-in-law, Sada Kaur, succeeded to his Sardari. She was a capable and statesman-like woman and ruled her possessions with ability. Mahan Singh at his death-bed had handed over the charge of his own son Ranjit Singh to Sada Kaur who being very ambitious had a plan to make her son-in-law as a stepping stone for his own design of carrying out for herself a kingdom. But in this, Ranjit Singh proved to be more than a match for her and as the future history shows, she herself played preciously the same role as she had designed for the son of Mahan Singh. Sada Kaur rendered a valuable service in the initial phase of Ranjit Singh's career. In 1823, serious differences arose between the two. Ranjit Singh occupied the Kanhiya territories. Sada Kaur expired in A.D. 1832 and with her exit from the stage of the world, the Kanhiya Misl ended.

## IX. Nakai Misl

The territory of Hira Singh consisted of Bhairawal, Chunian, Divalpur, Jambar, Jethpur, Kanganpur and Khudian. His headquarter was at Chunian, 60 km from Lahore on the road from Ferozepur to Multan.

Hira Singh was a Jat of Sandhu clan of Jats who had recently embraced Sikhism and was 'notoriously brave' according to Lepel Griffin. The Misl got its name from the region called Nakai lying between Lahore and Gugaira and between rivers Sutlej and Ravi. Through this region, the highway from Qandhar, Baluchistan, Sind, Multan and Bahawalpur passed to Lahore and Delhi.

He was succeeded by his cousin Nahar Singh, son of his uncle Natha Singh. He was killed a few months after in the battle of Komalia<sup>1</sup> against the Khairas in 1768 and was succeeded by his younger brother Ran Singh who proved himself to be the most powerful chief of the Nakai chiefs. He made precious additions of the Ta'alluqs of Bucheke, Chhanga Manga 69 kms from Lahore, Chhichha, Devsal, Fatehpur, Jethpur at one time Kot Kamalia, Sharakpur and Shergarh.

This Misl was not as powerful as other Misls such as Ahluwalia, Ramgarhia or Sukarchakia, nor its territory was very vast and spacious. Even then it was not feckless. The members of Nakka Dera were renowned for their bravery, strength and adventure. Ran Singh commanded a force of 2000 horsemen with camel swivels and a few guns. Ran Singh administered his territory from Baharwal which was his headquarter.

### *Kamar Singh pf Sayyadwala*

Kamar Singh, another Sandhu Jat converted to Sikhism, founded almost at the same time another branch of the Misl at Sayyadwala near Kot Kamalia. He was the son of Chaudhari Mitha and was imbued with Sikh ideology.

He subdued independent tribes living on both sides of the Ravi river such as Kathias, Khairas et al. To begin with, they offered tough opposition whenever the Nakai forces entered their territories, they would retire into the marshy lands and dense forests which were not easily passable.

But ultimately they were forced to settle down to a

1. Gian Singh III, p. 564 and Kanhiya Lal, p. 100 hold that Nahar Singh died of Thysis after his succession.

comparatively peaceful life. He divided his possession into two districts, Satghara and Sayyadwala. He constructed five forts at strategic places to keep under control habitually refractory tribes. These forts were situated at Chicha Watni, Kamalia and Killianwala. He paid his focalised attention to the development of agriculture. To protect Sayyadwala from the neighbouring tribes, he raised a brick wall around it with pillars and places for military posts. He conquered Kot Kamalia from Muhammad Yar Khan and Ahmad Yar Khan. He took care that the old tribal chiefs instead of being ousted were made subservient to him, and to this errand, he granted them Ta'alluqadari allowance, locally called Athog, amounting to five pies for each Kharwar of Nijkari or personal crops and one rupee per Kanal of Zabti or government crops.

There was a perpetual warfare between Ran Singh and Kamar Singh. Ran Singh attacked Sayyadwala but he could not succeed in the face of the stout resistance of Kamar Singh and had to withdraw ignominiously. Soon after, Kamar Singh went to Rahna Mohran village where Upera Kharal, a local Zamindar waited upon him regarding the settlement of the amount of revenue which he had to give to Kamar Singh. The discussion prolonged and Kharal Zamindar finding Kamar Singh unattended by his body-guards signalled his man to chop off his head. He did the job with supersonic speed. Kamar Singh's men reacted equally speedily and put the man to death. When Kamar Singh's family and his followers were mourning the death of Kamar Singh, Ran Singh took advantage of the situation. Throwing even ordinary courtesies to winds, he marched upon Sayyadwala and captured it. This happened in 1780. A little after Ran Singh passed away in 1781.

Kamar Singh was succeeded by his brother Wazir Singh and Ran Singh by his eldest son Bhagwan Singh. Both indulged in severe fighting. Wazir Singh proved stronger and recovered Sayyadwala and a few villages held by Bhagwan Singh. The year 1783 saw a terrible famine in northern India. The internecine warfare ceased for sometime. Budh Singh, a member of Nakai Misl was moved at the terrific plight of the people struggling against hunger. He sold his whole property, purchased grain and distributed a fixed quantity of it to each starving person without any consideration of caste, creed or religion. His was indeed, a benevolence inspired by Khalsa ideals of Guru Ka Langar. The beneficiaries who were mostly Muslims blessed Budh Singh for his act of kindness.

Meanwhile, Hira Singh's son Dal Singh had attained majority. He got himself married to the daughter of another Nakai Sardar, Charat Singh. On his father-in-law's demise, he demanded half of his estate from Charat Singh's son who, supported by Wazir Singh down-right rejected his claim. In the fight that ensued, Dal Singh lost his life which so anguished one of his servants that he shot dead Wazir Singh in 1790. Wazir Singh's family held siege upto 1798. In that year, Muzaffar Khan, governor of Multan and a relative of Shah Zaman taking advantage of the Shah's stay in the Punjab, swooped upon Sayyadwala and expelled the Sikhs.

### *Bhagwan Singh*

Bhagwan Singh, the head of the Baharowal house was a weakling. He considered it useful for himself to be attached to Mahan Singh Sukarchakia, who had emerged as one of the most powerful Sardars among the Sikhs. Accordingly, he agreed to pay him an annual tribute. Acute differences had arisen between Mahan Singh Sukarchakia and Jai Singh Kanhiya. Jai Singh attacked Bhagwan Singh and seized several of his parganas, just to irritate Mahan Singh. This drove Bhagwan Singh still closer to Mahan Singh who in due course married his sister Raj Kaur to Ranjit Singh. The marriage took place in 1798. In the fourth year of the marriage Raj Kaur bore an ill-fated son, Kharak Singh. After this alliance Bhagwan Singh conquered Pak Pattan from the Hans and recovered his villages which had been seized by Wazir Khan.

In 1803, Ranjit Singh seized all the Nakai territories and finally wound up the Nakai Misl.

Nakai Misl which by providence was allowed the opportunity to establish Khalsa rule in the region notorious for religious parochialism and tribal localism, ended up with achieving nothing to be proud of, instead leaving behind memories of mutual warfare, one Nakai Sardar beheading another Sardar.

Dr. Hari Ram Gupta has computed the territories held by Nakai Sardars in Bari Doab and Rachna Doab. According to him, Nakai Misl, territories in Bari Doab were Baharwal, Bucheke, Chhanga Manga, Chhichha, Chunian, Devsal, Dhauri, Dipalpur, Faridabad, Fatehpur, Gughra, Harrapa, Johbar, Jethpur, Kanganpur, Khudia, Raiwind. In Rachna Doab, their holdings were Chicha Watni, Fatehbad, Killianwala, Kot Kamalia, Sahiwal, Sayyadwala, Sharakpur, Shergarh.<sup>1</sup>

1. *History of the Sikhs*, IV, Manohar, 1995.



## X. Ramgarhia Misl

The founder of the Ramgarhia Misl was Khushal Singh, a Jat Sikh of the village Guga near Amritsar. He received 'Pahul' from the hands of Banda Singh Bahadur. When the Sikhs revolted against the Mughal government, he rose to eminence through his daring deeds. Khushal Singh was succeeded by Nand Singh who belonged to the village Sanghani near Amritsar. He too was a great fighter and exalted activities of his band. But the band acquired the status of Misl only under Jassa Singh who succeeded Nand Singh after his death.

### *Jassa Singh Ramgarhia*

Jassa Singh belonged to the village Sursingh which lies about 30 kms east of Khem Karan in the present district of Amritsar.

His date of birth is not known. However, he is said to have died in 1803 at the age of eighty. From this it can be deduced that he was born in 1723.

During his childhood and boyhood which are considered to be the most impressionable and the most formative periods of one's life, various influences combined together to shape his psyche and personality. His grand-father, Hardas, had received Pahul from Guru Gobind Singh and had also fought in some battles conducted by the Guru himself. His father, Bhagwan Singh, was wide awake and had mastered the text of Guru Granth Sahib. He also accompanied Guru Gobind Singh to Nanded (a town in Maharashtra province of India) and returned to Punjab alongwith Banda Singh Bahadur. Thus circumstanced, he grew to be ardently religious and impeccably heroic and was suffused with unbending spirit.

According to one scholar, "Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, in fact, was the product of Sikh ideology, family traditions and his personal reactions to various vicissitudes."

### *In the Employment of Adina Beg*

He rose to eminence when he was sixteen years and participated in the fight between Nadir Shah and Adina Beg alongwith his father. In the battle his father was killed and Adina Beg, in recognition of the service rendered by his father, granted him the post of Risaldar. A common Jagir of five villages viz., Valla, Verka, Sultanwind, Tung and Chubal was also granted to the five brothers inclusive of Jassa Singh. Out of these five villages, the

village Valla fell to the Share of Jassa Singh.

Soon after Jassa Singh together with two of his brothers Mali Singh and Tara Singh,<sup>1</sup> joined the band of Nand Singh under the Dal Khalsa. Within a short span of time, he developed the reputation of being the most daring among its members, so much so that when Nand Singh died, Jassa Singh was acknowledged as the indisputable leader of this band.

It is not exactly known as to when Jassa Singh snapped his ties with the Dal Khalsa. However, it is certain that he joined service with Adina Beg, the faujdar of the Jullundur Doab. He fought on the side of Adina Beg against Ahmad Shah Abdali and his gallantry was so marked that Adina gave him the command of one of his contingents which included Sikhs in a large number.

According to the anonymous author of *Ahwal-i-Adina Beg Khan*, Jassa Singh was made incharge of the civil administration of some territory. He acquitted himself very creditably and won the praise of his colleagues. This period proved a blessing for Jassa Singh as he grew familiar with the working of state machinery and developed intimate contacts with high officials including Kaura Mal.

#### *Jassa Singh deserted Adina Beg in Response to Panthic Call*

In October 1748, on the occasion of the Diwali, Muin-ul-Mulk (Mir Mannu) formulated a plan to finish the Sikhs, and asked Adina Beg to attack Amritsar. Jassa Singh accompanied Adina Beg. The siege was laid to the fortress named Ram Rauni. Five hundred Sikhs within the fort fought desperately. Two hundred of them laid down their lives fighting, while the remaining three hundred were reduced to the state of helplessness. All the supplies from outside had been stopped by the enemy, and as the provisions ran short, the Sikhs saw starvation and death staring in their faces. They grew desperate and thought of sallying out en-block, understandably to court death en-masse.

At this critical moment, Jassa Singh decided to desert Adina Beg for the cause of the Sikhs which was, in fact, the cause of the people.

The fear of ex-communication from the Khalsa also impelled him to take this decision. He suddenly joined the Sikh ranks, and began to harness his ability and pluck to find out means to ward

1. His other brothers were Khushal Singh and Jai Singh.

off the danger, the Khalsa was in.

From within the fort, he addressed a personal letter to Diwan Kaura Mal at Lahore requesting him to save three hundred lives if he could. Kaura Mal, partly out of the sympathy but more out of political sagacity, pleaded with Mir Mannu that he should raise the siege in view of the reported threat of the invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali and instead enlist their sympathy, even help against that formidable enemy.

The logic of Diwan Kaura Mal worked and the siege was raised. The Sikhs were granted a Jagir, understandably as an inducement to dissuade them from their anti-government activities.

Jassa Singh's esteem rose very high among the Sikhs and when the Sikhs were led by Ahluwalia and other Sardars to assist Kaura Mal against Shah Nawaz of Multan, Jassa Singh was left behind as incharge of the fort.

Jassa Singh took extraordinary interest in keeping the fort in a state of preparedness. He repaired it wherever it was warranted. Looking upon his interest in the fort, people began to use the name of the fort as a suffix to his name. He changed the original name 'Ram Rauni' and renamed it 'Ramgarh' (the fort of Guru Ram Das). His Misl also adopted the name of the fort.

Soon after, the relations between Muin and the Sikhs again deteriorated. Muin commissioned Adina Beg and Sadiq Beg to attack Ramgarh and crush the Sikhs. Jassa Singh fought bravely but finding any more resistance a futile exercise rushed out and piercing through the enemy's line reached a safe spot.

Muin-ul-Mulk expired in 1753 and the Punjab was thrown into utter disorder. Jassa Singh made the most of opportunity and rebuilt the fort (1753 A.D.), which was again destroyed, this time by Timur, the Durrani governor of Lahore. But when Timur was expelled from the Punjab by the combined forces of the Sikhs, Marathas and Adina Beg, the fort was built again by Jassa Singh Ramgarhia (1758 A.D.).

### *The Territorial Acquisitions of Jassa Singh Ramgarhia*

The death of Mir Mannu, who was probably the last strong Muslim provincial governor of the Punjab, unleashed the forces of anarchy in the Punjab. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia in close alliance with Jai Singh Kanhiya took full advantage of the unstable situations. He brought the territories north of Amritsar and those in the neighbourhood of Batala under his control. But he could

not continue his activities for long. When Adina Beg became the governor of Punjab under the Marathas, he sent Mir Aziz Bakhshi, who hunted down the Sikhs and butchered thousands of them mercilessly. Ram Rauni was besieged (1758 A.D.), Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and Jai Singh Kanhiya being among the besieged. The Sikhs, finding that the Mir's troops were more than a match for them in the open field, resorted to sallying forth at night and attacking the outposts of the besieging party, and returning again to their fort before allowing the Afghans to recover from their surprise attacks. Sardar Ramgarhia's role was outstanding and leading. At long last, Nand Singh, Jai Singh and other Sikhs were forced to effect their escape at one night. Many of the Sikhs fell under the swords of the Muslims. Those who escaped were styled Ramgarhias by their fellow-countrymen as a compliment to the sacred place where they had sought shelter and to which they stuck with unique steadfastness.

After the death of Adina Beg in 1758, the ever-vigilant Sikhs became more aggressive. About this time, Jassa Singh actively aided and abetted by the Kanhiya Misl, besieged and occupied Dina Nagar, Batala, Kalanaur, Sri Hargobindpur, Qadian, Ghoman and many other towns and places of the districts of Amritsar and Gurdaspur. In the flush of victories he constructed a bazaar, known as Katra in Punjabi parlance, at Amritsar, the theo-political capital of the Sikhs, understandably to give expression to his long-cherished desire to fraternise with the holy city. Thereafter, Jassa Singh added to his possessions some territories in the neighbourhood of Hoshiarpur. Parganas of Maniwal, Urmur Tanda, Sarh and Miani in the Jullundur Doab were also occupied.

#### *Wadda Ghallughara and Jassa Singh—(Feb. 5, 1762)*

Ahmad Shah defeated the Marathas in A.D. 1761 in the battle of Panipat. When he retraced his steps to Afghanistan, his forces were harassed and plundered by the Sikhs. He got enraged and decided to teach the Khalsa a lesson.

To this end, he led an expedition in 1761-62. He blew Harimandir and advanced to Kup where the Sikhs in very large numbers were resting. Nearly 12,000 Sikhs were killed at Kup. The event is known as Wadda Ghallughara—a Big Holocaust. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and his two brothers, Mali Singh and Tara Singh, showed unique bravery in this event. But they could not stand before the might of the enemy and had to seek safety in the

fortresses of the Shivalik hills.

When Abdali went back to Afghanistan, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia came back to the plains and re-occupied the territories he had left. In the meantime, Nand Singh died and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia became the chief of the Misl. He joined hands with Jai Singh, the leader of the Kanhiya Misl and occupied different areas of the Punjab. Many forts were constructed and garrisoned.

### *Defeat of Ubed Khan*

When Khwaja Ubed Khan, the Durrani governor of Lahore, attacked the fort of Gujranwala, the united armies of the Ramgarhia and the Kanhiya Misls gave a bitter defeat to the Khwaja and took hold of a huge quantity of gun-powder, ammunition and cannons which they divided among themselves.

A year after this Ahmad Shah again appeared on the scene and having crossed the Sutlej, he advanced as far as Jandiala carrying fire and sword on his way. The Sikhs, as usual, fled and concealed themselves in deserts and hills, but no sooner had the Shah started for Kabul, than the Ramgarhias made themselves master of Batala and Kalanaur, expelling Khwaja Ubed and seizing the surrounding country. According to Qazi Nur Muhammad, Jassa Singh Thoka looked like a lion in stature.<sup>1</sup>

### *Subjection of Hill States*

Almost simultaneously Jassa Singh decided to bring the hill states to his subjection. Within a very short period, he made Ghumand Chand the ruler of Kangra, Prithvi Singh the ruler of Nurpur, Raj Singh the ruler of Chamba, accept his overlordship. He also occupied Dipalpur, Datarpur, Haripur and Jaswan. With all these territorial acquisitions, it can be safely vouchsafed that Ramgarhia possessions included almost the whole of the hilly country between the Ravi and the Beas, and the vast territories of the Jullundur Doab in the plains. To exercise the requisite control over the territories, Ramgarh was not found to be the fit place and hence Sri Hargobindpur near Batala was made the headquarter of the Misl. Jassa Singh built several forts at strategic places within his territories and was very particular in extending protection to the states under his overlordship, as for instance, he was quick enough to protect Chamba against the covetous eyes of Ranjit Dev of Jammu.

1. Qazi Nur Muhammad, *Jang Nama*, Statement No. 40.

Jassa Singh, now at the height of his power, gave Batala with the neighbouring country, to his brother Mali Singh and Kalanaur to his other brother Tara Singh, keeping the rest for himself.

### *Antagonism between Ramgarhias and Kanhyias*

Soon friction took place between the Ramgarhias and the Kanhyias. Kanhyias and Ramgarhias led a joint attack on Kasur. A lot of booty fell into the hands of the allies. Mali Singh concealed a valuable portion of the booty while the rest was divided equally between the allies. When later on, the fact of the concealment of a part of the booty came to the notice of Jai Singh, he was much embittered and this marked the beginning of their mutual relations going a wrong.

In A.D. 1774 Jai Singh Kanhiya occupied the fort of Kangra by a stratagem. This was something which was too bitter to swallow by Ramgarhia Sardar although he remained quiescent for the time being.

Shortly after, an opportunity afforded itself to Ramgarhia Sardar to give vent to his suppressed anger. The widow of Nand Singh, a Bhangi Misldar, gave away Pathankot as Jagir to his son-in-law Tara Singh, the brother of Hakikat Singh Kanhiya.

Ganda Singh, the Bhangi chief, asked the Kanhiyas to return him Pathankot, which he said had been bestowed by his brother, Jhanda Singh, and Nand Singh. Kanhiyas rejected the proposal and prepared for war. In this, they were to be actively aided by the Ahluwalias. The contending parties met each other at Dina Nagar in 1774, but after the indecisive fighting Ganda Singh was suddenly taken ill and died. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia also met an accident, though he escaped unhurt. The Bhangis fled the battlefield. This failure greatly eroded the prestige of the Ramgarhia Sardar.

Another notable development that took place was that enmity with Kanhiyas escalated and now the Ahluwalias also became enemies of the Ramgarhias.

The cordial relations that had existed between the two Misls upto 1786 could not be re-established even after the battle at Dina Nagar in which Ramgarhias had been defeated.

Jassa Singh Ramgarhia burning with revenge instigated the Rani of Kapurthala against the Ahluwalias and encouraged her to stop paying tribute to the latter. Here again he failed.

Jassa Singh Ahluwalia one-day in 1775 was going to Achal near Batala to attend the fair. Mali Singh, the brother of Jassa Singh



Ramgarhia, attacked him. In fight many men of Ahluwalia chief lost their lives. Jassa Singh was wounded twice and fell down his horse and became unconscious. Mali Singh took him in a palanquin to Hargobindpur. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia admonished his brother for his unprovoked attack, especially on the one who was hailed as the leader of Dal Khalsa and Panth. He at once waited upon the Ahluwalia and with folded hands expressed his deep regrets. He said most humbly, "This had occurred on account of the foolishness of Mali Singh. Please consider this place as your own home and excuse Mali Singh." Jassa Singh Ahluwalia kept silent. On the third day when he decided to depart, Ramgarhia Sardar offered him a horse, and a shawl in token of his reverence for him.

Jassa Singh Ahluwalia could not forget the insult hurled by Mali Singh and attacked Zahura on the river Beas. Ramgarhias defended it but ultimately were dislodged. In the battle Ramgarhia chief received a gun shot. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia gave Zahura to Baghel Singh Karor Singhia to strengthen his party.

*Expulsion of Jassa Singh from Trans-Sutlej Region—(1778 A.D.)*

Shortly after in September 1778, a quarrel arose between the Ramgarhias and Kanhyias over the revenue of certain territories. This happened because the possession of both lay intermingled in Upper Bari Doab and Upper Jullundur Doab. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia supported Kanhiya Sardar Jai Singh. Jai Singh and Hakikat Singh assisted by an Ahluwalia contingent attacked Sri Hargobindpur, the headquarter of Jassa Singh Ramgarhia. Ramgarhia Sardar put up bold resistance which wore down under the pressure of the attackers with the consequence that he had to flee from the Trans-Sutlej region. About this time Gurbakhsh Singh and Jai Singh attacked Batala, which was then held by Mali Singh, the brother of Jassa Singh Ramgarhia. Mali Singh was a great tyrant. He plundered and dishonoured people. Even his personal character was not above reproach. He was lewd. Whenever a beautiful damsel came to his notice, he forcibly seized her. He was immensely haughty, incorrigible, arrogant and palpably inconsiderate. He was heartless—so much so he once shot down a person who cut his way in front of him. His officers and people alike were tired of him. Therefore when the Kanhyias besieged the city, they provided provisions and money. They also took courage to open the gates of the city to the besiegers. Mali Singh

fled and Batala fell into the hands of the Kanhiyas. Gurbakhsh Singh was made the incharge of the city. Among the bureaucrats who helped Gurbakhsh Singh, the most important and distinguished were Raja Singh, Diwan Singh, Mansabdar Qanungo and one black Brahmin Tara Chand. Jassa Singh's brother Khushal Singh was mortally wounded in this engagement. He breathed his last a few days after Batala was captured.

The victorious troops then marched upon Kalanaur held by Tara Singh, another brother of Jassa Singh Ramgarhia. He was defeated and killed. Kalanaur was occupied by Hakikat Singh Kanhiya. In this way the whole country of the Ramgarhias in Trans-Sutlej region was wrested by the allies.

*Ramgarhia Sardar Established Himself at  
Hansi and Hissar—(A.D. 1778)*

The two surviving Ramgarhia brothers, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and Mali Singh made for the region of Hansi and Hissar in search of new moorings. They left their families with the Zamindars of Phagwara, once tributary of Ramgarhia Misl and entered cis-Sutlej area. He built rapport with Raja Amar Singh of Patiala who asked him to help him in his fight against the Bhatties of Sirsa. He readily agreed and the Raja succeeded in subjugating the Bhatties.

At Sirsa a sort of miracle took place. Jassa Singh's men lost a couple of brass buckets while drawing water from a well which was about a hundred feet deep. A metal piece containing a number of sharp curved hooks and fastened to a rope was thrown into the well to draw the buckets out of the well. It so happened that the hooks of the metal piece got stuck up with some heavy object. An expert diver was employed to dive into the water to find out what that object was. He discovered four iron boxes full of gold coins worth three or four lakhs. This unexpected wealth boosted Jassa Singh's morale, who felt that God was exceptionally kind to him and he was bound to attain success. Soon after, he set up his headquarter at Tosham (10 km distant from Bhiwani) a very important place wherefrom he could find an easy shelter in the local hills, in case there was some emergency. Further, this was a good base to carry on his plundering raids in Delhi region. Within months, he reduced Hissar and Hansi.

*Jassa Singh ravaged Delhi (A.D. 1783)*

Then he extended his ravages upon Delhi. Early in March,

he came to know that the Dal Khalsa under Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was advancing upon Delhi. He joined it at Delhi on March 10, 1783. On March 11, Dal Khalsa entered the Red Fort and seated Jassa Singh Ahluwalia on Imperial throne designating him Badshah Singh. Ramgarhia Sardar objected to all this arguing that no one was entitled to assume such a title without the approval of Sarbat Khalsa. The argument was weighty enough to constrain Jassa Singh Ahluwalia to dismount the throne forthwith and renounce the title. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia captured four guns and a large variegated marble slab 6'x4'x3". Zabita Khan agreed to pay him 10000 rupees a year on his consenting not to raid Saharanpur area. This happened in January, 1784.

On 5th February, he alongwith Karam Singh Nirmala sacked Naula village and then ravaged districts of Saharanpur, Muzaffar Nagar and Meerut. After this, they reached Sardhana, the headquarter of Begam Samru, who at that time was at Delhi along with his step son Zaffaryab Khan. The Emperor at Delhi apprehended trouble and detained Begam and his son for his help. But the Sikhs crossed Barari Ghat and returned home. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia deposited his booty at Tosham. To make himself more well-provisioned, he in the beginning of January 1785, joined Baghel Singh Karorsinghia and Gurdit Singh of Ladwa. First they plundered the villages and towns of Barah Sadat, then a few villages in Rohil Khand. Last of all, they plundered Chandausi, a trade centre and a rich town because of its flourishing banking business.

#### *Re-occupation of His Territories in Trans-Sutlej Region*

With his prestige gone very high and with plenty of money at his disposal, the Sardar now focalised his attention on the affairs of the Punjab on the eastern side of the river Sutlej. The circumstances had undergone a sea change. Mahan Singh Sukarchakia and Jai Singh Kanhiya quarrelled with each other over the booty of Jammu. Sukarchakia chief very cleverly allied with Sansar Chand Katoch and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia. Both these allies bore enmity towards Jai Singh Kanhiya, Sansar Chand because of his usurpation of Kangra Fort and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia because of his seizure of his territories in the Trans-Sutlej region of the Punjab. The Sukarchakia chief also successfully manoeuvred to exact promise from Bhag Singh Ahluwalia to remain neutral in his impending conflict with Kanhiya Misl.

The battle took place about the middle of February, 1785 near Achal. It was a hard contest, but it ended with the defeat of Jai Singh. His very able son, Gurbakhsh Singh, was killed in the battle-field causing a terrific shock to his father.

Jassa Singh Ramgarhia recovered his lost territories. Sansar Chand occupied a few villages at the foot of the hills. Mahan Singh also annexed some of Kanhiya territory. Jai Singh was left with a few places including Kangra fort and Atalgarh near Mukerian.

Jassa Singh Ramgarhia established his headquarter at Batala. In 1788 he made bold of giving shelter to Bhambu Khan who came to Sikh territory to save himself from the wrath of Scindia, the regent of Mughal Emperor because his elder brother, Ghulam Qadir, the grandson of Najib-ud-Daula, mercilessly had blinded the Emperor. Jassa Singh granted him and his mother five villages of the pargana of Phagwara for his sustenance. He did all in defiance of the pressure of Scindia and the British. In this context, he also discounted the opinion of his own people who were unwilling to endorse the lenient view-point of Ramgarhia Sardar.

Jai Singh Kanhiya was much pained at the defeat and loss of Batala. He very adroitly attached to himself Mahan Singh Sukarchakia and Bhag Singh Ahluwalia. Then he attacked Batala. Jassa Singh doggedly resisted till the besiegers had to raise the siege after 21 days of warfare.

Nine years after, Sada Kaur, the widow of Gurbakhsh Singh, resolved to punish Jassa Singh Ramgarhia. In her endeavour to achieve her objective, she very smartly inveigled his son-in-law Ranjit Singh to help her. When adequate preparations had been made, she besieged Ramgarhia Sardar in his Miani fort. The siege persisted for four months. Jassa Singh ran short of ammunition and provisions. Hard-pressed he sent his emissary to Sahib Singh Bedi, a highly respected scion of Guru Nanak's family, to seek his intervention. Sahib Singh did make efforts for the cessation of warfare but because of Sada Kaur's intransigency, he failed. About this time, luckily for Ramgarhia Sardar, the river flooded inundating the whole camp of Sada Kaur which lay in the dry bed of the river. Sada Kaur had to withdraw, leaving Jassa Singh unbent.

### *Ramgarhia Territories*

Ramgarhia territories at the time of the death of Ramgarhia Sardar comprised Akbarabad, Banga, Begowal, Dabwan, Dasua, Dopal, Gadampur, Garhdiwala, Hajipur, Thora, Lekhpur, Mahralla,

Manakpur, Mangla, Maniwal, Meghowal, Miani, Naya Nangal, Rohila, Sahri, Sarih, Sharif Chak. Talwara. Tanda, Urmur, Yahiyapur, Zahura all in Jullundur Doab.

In Bari Doab, Afghanwala, Batala, Banbala, Dina Nagar, Ghuman, Gurdaspur, Halwara, Jandiala, Kalanaur, Khakowal, Mattewa, Qadian, Ramgarh fort at Amritsar, Sri Hargobindpur.

Besides the above-said territories, Ramgarhias had tributaries in thirteen Hindu states and one Muslim state of Shahpur Kandi.

Hissar and Hansi areas also formed the part of the territories of Ramgarhia Misl.

### *Relations with the British*

He did not have any regular channel of communication with British; nor did he station any emissary of his at Calcutta or at Lucknow. Only in 1797, he wrote a letter to Lumsdon, British resident at Lucknow. The letter expressed the Sardar's desire to enter into friendly correspondence with the British and cherished that if the British supported the Sikhs, the invasions of Shah Zaman could be checkmated for all times to come. Rao Ghasi Ram took this letter to Lumsdon.

How did the British government react, it is not known. Most probably, it took no notice of the letter because upto now probably they had been convinced that the Sardar was no substitute for Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and the internecine warfare among the Sikh chiefs had incapacitated them to be a worthwhile ally or a dangerous foe.

Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, besides being a great general, a successful administrator and a good diplomat, was a devoted Sikh, highly sympathetic and superbly good-natured (*Bisyar Ikblaq Pasand*). He could stake his interests whenever there was a call of the Panth. Even for a minute, he did not pause while taking decision to desert his master, Muin-ul-Mulk to join his brethren locked up in the fort named Ram Rauni. He prided on being assigned the task of guarding Amritsar, especially Sri Darbar Sahib complex. He built and rebuilt Ram Rauni fort and named it 'Ramgarh'—the fort of the Guru Ram Das. His feats of generalship and diplomacy were also astonishing. It was no easy task to establish his rule after he had been expelled from Trans-Sutlej region. But the fact that he did establish himself as a ruler in Hissar and Hansi areas from his base Tosham, amply testify to his brilliance both as a general and a diplomat.

About his kindness, he was an example by himself. A Brahmin complained that his married daughter had been abducted by a Muslim officer of Hissar. He at once despatched his soldiers. The officer was apprehended and killed. The girl was restored to her husband and she was also given five thousand rupees as a token of Sardar's desire to see the pair happy. Ramgarhia's kindness was not restrained either by adverse situation or by any prejudice. Gurdit Singh Bhangi, his mother Mai Sukhan and Ranjit Singh's Aunt Raj Kaur implored the Sardar for protection and livelihood. The Sardar granted villages for their maintenance, caring little about the likely adverse reactions of Ranjit Singh. Similarly, he gave villages in Banga pargana to the hard-pressed Bhambu Khan. The grandson of Najib-ud-Daula Rohilla who had taken shelter in Punjab abandoning his fort Ghausgarh.

James Brown in 1786, estimated the military strength of Jassa Singh Ramgarhia at 3000 horse and 1000 foot.

The Sardar died at the age of eighty.

Jassa Singh had four brothers, Tara Singh, Mali Singh, Khushal Singh and Jai Singh, all died in his life-time. Of his two sons, the elder Jodh Singh succeeded him. He subdued the hill chiefs who had ceased to pay tribute. He further improved the finances of the state, and according to one estimate, his income rose nearly 40 lakhs. He like his father was a towering figure, tall, handsome, cute, intelligent and deeply religious.

Ranjit Singh, who after the death of his father, had embarked upon carving out a kingdom for himself, planned to win over powerful Sikh chiefs to make use of their military and financial resources. As a part of his plan, he approached Jodh Singh to establish the bond of friendship with him. Jodh Singh agreed on two conditions—one, his family estates such as Batala, Kalanaur, Sanghurwala and Zahura should be restored to him; secondly, Gurdit Singh Bhangi and his mother driven away by the Maharaja from Amritsar should be granted Jagir to provide them a decent living. Ranjit Singh consented and Jodh Singh became friendly to him.

To formalise the mutual friendship both of them reached Amritsar. Ranjit Singh drew up a document of friendly alliance, which bore the signature of Jodh Singh and the impression of Ranjit Singh's open palm dyed with saffron colour.

Thereafter, Jodh Singh became his ally and took part in various military expeditions of Ranjit Singh. The Maharaja



conferred upon him the pargana of Ghuman which he seized from Gulab Singh Khattar, and a few villages in Shikhpura district.

Bir Singh, the younger brother of Jodh Singh also was well disposed towards Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He attended the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Jodh Singh along with Mohkam Chand took part in the expedition to Multan. Ranjit Singh once asked him to exchange turbans, a Punjabi way to express perpetual friendship. He politely declined remarking, "It was a great favour of the Maharaja to allow him to keep his own turban and his head into the bargain." Jodh Singh died in August 23, 1815. Maharaja Ranjit Singh called his three sons, Diwan Singh, Hira Singh and Vir Singh at Nadaun. All the Ramgarhia territories were seized. About 150 forts, big and small, were razed to the ground. The Ramgarhia Misl met its finale at the hands of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

## **XI. Sukarchakia Misl**

The sixth descendant of Kulu was Takhat Mal. He was considered to be a leading man of the village, Sukarchak, near Gujranwala. He died in A.D. 1653, leaving two sons, Balu and Bara. Bara was also known as Bhai because of his religious disposition. He learnt to read and recite Guru Granth Sahib at an early age and when he neared twenty-five he set out for Amritsar to receive 'Pahul' but could not do so because he met an accident on the way. While on the verge of death, he enjoined upon his son, Buddha never to forget to receive 'Pahul'.

Bara died in A.D. 1679. When Buddha attained the age of discretion, he acted on the advice of his late father and received 'Pahul' from the sacred hands of Guru Gobind Singh. Buddha was, therefore, the first member of the family who entered into the order of the Khalsa and was named Budh Singh. He was poignantly aware and acutely conscious of the duties which ought to have been performed by the Sikhs. He was courageous, enterprising and sagacious. Very soon he became famous in engineering attacks on his enemies. 'Singh' means a lion, and Budh Singh was no less than one. On his body, he had as many as forty scars of swords, spears and bullets. Budh Singh was good-humoured, quick-witted and all mercy for the oppressed. He died of apoplexy in 1716. His wife, stricken with grief, ran a sword through her heart. The bodies of husband and wife were burnt together.

He was survived by his two sons, Nodh Singh and Chanda

Singh, from the latter of whom the Sindhianwala branch of the family, related to the Maharaja on the mother's side, sprang. Nodh Singh married the daughter of Gulab Singh, a landlord of Majitha, and as his power and importance increased, he built in his village Sukarchak, a big house of the shape of a small fortress. Shortly after this, Nodh Singh raised a band of 30 horsemen and thus laid the foundation of the greatness of his house. Nodh Singh was much dreaded by the people from the borders of Rawalpindi to the banks of the Sutlej.

Nodh Singh joined the Faizulpuria Misl of Nawab Kapur Singh about the time of the first invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali. His men and he himself were among those who plundered the baggage and the stragglers of the invading army Sultan Khan Chatha of Rasulnagar forcibly converted six Sikhs to Islam. Nodh Singh along with his brother Chanda Singh attacked Rasulnagar to punish the Sultan for his excesses. The city was pillaged ruthlessly and the Sultan was forced to free the converted Sikhs to come back to the fold of Sikhism. He also moved fast against Shahab-ud-Din of Ferozwala about whom news reached him that he had forcibly taken into his custody four innocent Sikhs of village Karyala and had removed their Keshas—one of the five emblems of the Khalsa. He put Shahab-ud-Din to death and released the Sikhs. In 1749, Nodh Singh had an affray with some Afghans, and received a gun-shot wound in his head of which three years later, i.e. in 1752, he died leaving behind four sons—Charat Singh, Dal Singh, Chet Singh and Mangat Singh.

Charat Singh succeeded to the patrimony after the death of his father. He was born in A.D. 1721. He was brave, far-sighted and enterprising. According to Payne, "he was a Jat Sardar who repeatedly distinguished himself in the early struggles with Ahmad Shah." He soon separated himself from the Faizulpuria Misl. By A.D. 1752 he had gained a larger following. He led his followers into Rachna Doab and occupied some of its territory. He shifted his headquarter from Raja Sansi (near Amritsar) (where he had shifted on account of family dissensions) to Gujranwala. In 1756 he married the daughter of Sardar Amir Singh of Gujranwala. "This marriage," says Latif, "united the wealth and strength of the two Sardars and led to the formation of a separate Misl, which, after the place where he resided, was named Sukarchakia Misl." After consolidating his position, Charat Singh assisted by Amir Singh, fell on Eminabad, plundered the city, and killed the Mughal faujdar

(A.D. 1757). He was prompted to do so because the faujdar harassed both the Hindus and the Sikhs of the area.

Next year, Charat Singh conquered Sialkot. In 1757, Charat Singh considering the Kachi Sarai (built in mud) at Gujranwala ill-adapted to meet fresh military challenges, converted it into a pucca fort.

The rising power of Charat Singh made Khwaja Ubed Khan, the governor of Lahore to take a firm action against him. Accordingly in 1760, he marched on Gujranwala but the invading army was completely routed by Charat Singh and his Sikh allies such as Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Bhangi chiefs Hari Singh, Jhanda Singh, Lehna Singh and Gujjar Singh, Jai Singh and Sobha Singh Kanhiyas.

In A.D. 1762 when Ahmad Shah Abdali invaded the Punjab for the sixth time, Charat Singh conscious of his own inability to oppose the disciplined army of the Shah in the open field, made guerilla attacks on the Afghans, and plundered their baggage. The Afghans, on their part levelled to the ground the mud fort of Gujranwala. In Wadda Ghallughara (Big Holocaust) Charat Singh played a dominant role in opposing the enemy and bolstering up the morale of the Sikhs.

On the departure of Ahmad Shah Abdali from the Punjab, Charat Singh sacked Wazirabad, drove its faujdar and occupied it. He then conquered Ahmedabad which he gave to Dal Singh. He defeated the tyrant, Nur-ud-Din, a general of Ahmad Shah Abdali and occupied Rohtas. After this, Charat Singh conquered Dhanni, Chakwal and Jalalpur. He then subdued Pind Dadan Khan and placed it in the charge of Budh Singh and Gor Singh. Proceeding onwards he conquered Kot Sahib Khan and Raja ka Kot, two large towns and then returned to Gujranwala. He captured the salt mines of Khewra as well from the Bhangis, that proved a good source of income to him.

The Zamindars of Chakwal Jalalpur also accepted his overlordship. In 1764 when Ahmad Shah Abdali invaded India for the seventh time, he was joined by Naseer Khan, Baloch chief of Kalat with 12000 Balochi troops. Qazi Nur Muhammad, who had accompanied his protegee Naseer Khan writes that in a battle at Lahore Naseer Khan was stoutly opposed by Charat Singh Sukarchakia. Naseer Khan's horse was killed by a bullet and he escaped to his camp. On his return journey also, he was harassed by Charat Singh. In May 1767, Charat Singh along with Gujjar Singh marched upon

Jhelum. Its Gakhar chief fled to take shelter in the fort of Rohtas. Charat Singh entrusted Jhelum town to Dada Ram Singh.

After a while, Sarbuland Khan, the paternal uncle of Ahmad Shah Abdali, who was on his way to Kabul after having relinquished his charge of governorship of Kashmir, was attacked by Charat Singh in association with Gujjar Singh Bhangi at Rohtas. He put up stout resistance with his 10 to 12 thousand troopers. The Sikhs laid siege to Rohtas. Even after four months of persistent endeavour, its fall seemed to be a remote possibility. They now resorted to a stratagem. They raised the siege and started moving away from the fort. This they did just to draw Sarbuland Khan out of the fort to make a sudden attack on his forces outside the fort. Luckily for them Sarbuland Khan fell into their trap. He came out along with his forces. Charat Singh suddenly swung back and took over the fort. Sarbuland Khan was made captive. Charat Singh true to the Sikh tenets that the fallen/captive enemy should be treated nicely, showed due respect and courtesy to Sarbuland Khan.

Sarbuland Khan offered to serve under him as a governor, if he (Charat Singh) proclaimed himself as a king. Charat Singh said, "The kingship is already bestowed on us by the Guru. We want to keep you as a prisoner so that the world may know that Charat Singh had captured the uncle of the Shah." "But there is a still greater name in releasing me," said Sarbuland Khan, "they will say," he continued, "that Charat Singh captured the uncle of Ahmad Shah and then set him at liberty." The Khan paid two lakh rupees to the Sardar, who allowed him to return to his country. Consequent upon the victory of the Sikhs, the entire territory between the Jhelum and Indus came into the hands of Charat Singh and his Bhangi allies.<sup>1</sup>

In a short period of fifteen years, Charat Singh became the master of Gujranwala, Wazirabad, Ramnagar, Sialkot, Rohtas, Pind Dadan Khan and the areas of Dhani and Pothohar. Charat Singh had on his administrative staff a number of efficient Kardars which included Dal Singh Gill, Bhag Singh Virk, Budh Singh, Gian Singh, Dharam Singh Batasa, Tahal Singh Chhachhi, Nirmal Singh, Himmat Singh, Dada Ram Singh and Sahaj Singh.<sup>2</sup>

The Awans, Janjuas, Ghebas, Alipals, Badials, Jodras and Sagri Pathans of Makhad also accepted the overlordship of Sardar Charat Singh.

1. Sohan Lal Suri, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 11-12.

2. Gupta Hari Ram, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. IV, Delhi, 1982, p. 293.

Soon, the increasing power of Charat Singh kindled jealousy among rival Misldars. None, however, became more apprehensive than the Sardars of the Bhangi Misl who had from the start entertained hostile feelings towards the Sukarchakias which acquired intensity with the occupation highly revenue-yielding mines of Khewra, Nurpur and Warcha. The attitudinal hostility galvanised itself into open conflict when circumstances arose in a border hill state involving a general rupture between various Misls.

Ranjit Dev, the Raja of Jammu, had some mis-understanding with the eldest son, Brij Raj Dev, whom he desired to deprive of the right of succession, in favour of the youngest son, Mian Dalel Singh. Brij Raj Dev rebelled against his father, and Charat Singh expoused his cause on the condition that if Brij Raj Dev succeeded, he would pass him a big amount of annual tribute.

Jai Singh Kanhiya also agreed to help Brij Raj Dev. Ranjit Dev, on his part, got the help of Bhangi Misl under Jhanda Singh, and various other hill chiefs. Both the armies met each other on the banks of the Besantie river. But at this time, Charat Singh was killed by the bursting of a match-lock in the hands of his own man (1774). Had this event not been followed on the next day by the assassination of Bhangi chief, Jhanda Singh, it would probably have given the victory to Ranjit Dev. These events brought about the cessation of hostilities. The Sikh forces of both sides withdrew to their respective territories, leaving Ranjit Dev and his son to settle their disputes among themselves as best as they could. Charat Singh had been survived by his son Mahan Singh, his daughter Raj Kaur and a widow Desan.

### *Mahan Singh*

The territory left by Charat Singh on his death yielded about three lakhs of rupees annually and was inherited by his eldest son Mahan Singh,<sup>1</sup> then only ten years old. Charat Singh's daughter Raj Kaur, had been married to Sahib Singh, son of the famous Gujjar Singh Bhangi. Mahan Singh being too young to take upon himself the responsibility of governing the Misl, his mother, Desan, assumed the charge of the affairs of the state. She was assisted in her task by Jai Singh Kanhiya. She acquitted herself creditably. She rebuilt the fort at Gujranwala, which had been destroyed by

1. He was born in A.D. 1760.

Ahmad Shah Abdali.

Several subordinate chiefs revolted to shake off their dependence upon Mahan Singh either because they were prompted by the desire to be independent, or they were dissatisfied with the regent widow who had fallen in love with one Jai Ram Missar. Prominent among these was Dharam Singh who openly rebelled. But soon their revolts were crushed and they were effectively punished. Just at this time, Mahan Singh was married to the daughter of Gajpat Singh of Jind, to whom the Sardar had been previously betrothed. The bride, named Raj Kaur, was ever after called 'Mai Malwain'.

In 1780, Mahan Singh cut his "leading strings and took the field at the head of his Misl, to follow in his father's footsteps."<sup>1</sup>

The first exploit of Mahan Singh was against Pir Muhammad, the ruler of the Chatha tribe, on the eastern bank of the river Chenab, who was defeated by the Sardar at Rasul Nagar which was captured and was renamed Ram Nagar (1779).<sup>2</sup> Dal Singh was appointed the administrator of these places. Shortly after the Chathas rose again to be repressed again by Mahan Singh. This time he occupied Alipur and renamed it Akalgarh.

All these conquests increased the prestige of Mahan Singh, and as a consequence, many a chief who had been dependents of the Bhangi Misl, transferred their allegiance to him. Two years after the fall of Rasul Nagar, on 13th November 1780, his wife, Mai Malwain, presented him with a son to whom he gave the name Ranjit Singh, who, in the days to come, was destined to rule over the country of the five rivers.

Mahan Singh, next, thought of extending and enlarging his dominions. The power of Bhangi Misl had been effectually broken by Timur Shah, the son of Ahmad Shah Durrani. Mahan Singh took advantage of their weakness and took possession of Pindi Bhattian, Sahiwal, Isa Khel and Musa Khel. All these places belonged to Desa Singh Bhangi who being a debauch was unable to retain them.

Desa Singh called his brother-in-law, Sahib Singh, to his aid. But before he could render any aid, he quarrelled with his elder brother Sukha Singh and the irony of circumstances was that, he, instead of rendering help to Desa Singh, got the assistance of

1. Gorden, *The Sikhs*, p. 81.

2. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Twarikh*, II, p. 20.



Mahan Singh and killed his brother in action. The change in situation saved Mahan Singh from the combined attack of Desa Singh and Sahib Singh.

Mahan Singh next, invaded Kotli in the neighbourhood of Sialkot, well-known for the manufacture of match-locks and realised a heavy indemnity from its Bhangi Sardars. During his stay here, he invited a large number of Bhangi Sardars, out of whom twenty-two complied with his invitation. He seized and imprisoned them. They included among others Charat Singh Kalalwala, Daya Singh, Dhanna Singh and Mihan Singh Wadalia. These Sardars secured their release only on payment of heavy tributes according to their rank and capacity. Although all this was against all standards of morality, yet he succeeded in striking terror into the hearts of the chiefs to such extent that none dared to oppose him.

After this, he marched towards Jammu. Ranjit Dev having died, his son Brij Raj Dev succeeded to him. He put his younger brother Dalel Singh who had earlier revolted against him, behind the bars.

Brij Raj Dev however, proved to be an inefficient and a weak ruler. His subjects in general were discontented. This thing naturally encouraged the aspiring Sukarchakia chief to cast his avaracious glance on Jammu territory. Besides, circumstances moved in such a way that he had to interfere in the affairs of Jammu. Brij Raj Dev, on ascending the 'gaddi' wished to win back the lost territory and requested Jai Singh Kanhiya and Hakikat Singh for aid. Kanhiyas did render aid and recovered Karianwala for the Jammu Raja after a pitched battle, but just after this, the Kanhiyas transferred their allegiance to the Bhangis. At this juncture, Brij Raj Dev called Mahan Singh to his assistance. Even then, Brij Raj Dev was defeated and Mahan Singh also felt humbled. The Kanhiyas and Bhangis succeeded in extracting tribute of Rs. 30,000.

Six months after the above agreement had been entered into, the Jammu Raja refused to pay the tribute to the Kanhiyas. The Kanhiyas were much upset and invited Mahan Singh to join them in raiding Jammu.

Mahan Singh threw to winds his pledge of friendship with the Jammu ruler, and promised to help the Kanhiyas. As per plan, Hakikat Singh and Mahan Singh were to march together on Jammu, but Mahan Singh who wanted to enrich himself singly with the

booty, did not inform Hakikat Singh and fell upon the town which was thoroughly plundered. Hakikat Singh was shocked at this fraud of Mahan Singh. Shortly after he died, perhaps, out of grief. Jai Singh Kanhiya was also shocked at the mis-demeanour of Mahan Singh and when the latter went to pay his respect to his old patron Jai Singh on the Diwali day of 1784 at Amritsar, he was insulted by the Kanhiya chief who spoke, "Go away, you Bhatia (dancing boy); I do not want to hear your sentimental talk."

For Mahan Singh this was too much to be borne in silence. He invited Jassa Singh Ramgarhia from across the Sutlej who was the enemy of the Kanhiyas. He also sought the help of Sansar Chand Katoch of Kangra, another enemy of the Kanhiyas. The combined armies completely routed the Kanhiyas in the battle fought near Achal Batala. Gurbakhsh Singh, the intelligent and favourite son of Jai Singh, got killed and Jai Singh was effectually humbled by the double sorrow.

Kanhiya chief had another trial with Mahan Singh at Naushehra, but here also he had to face discomfiture.

Sada Kaur, the widow of Gurbakhsh Singh, now exercised the greatest influence over her old father-in-law. She proposed the betrothal of his only daughter Mehtab Kaur to the younger son of Mahan Singh, hoping thereby to unite the Sukarchakia and Kanhiya families in a permanent bond of friendship. The alliance was struck, restoring peace between the Sukarchakias and Kanhiyas. The alliance proved very fortunate for Ranjit Singh in his future conquests and consolidation of the Punjab under his standard of monarchy.

In 1788, Gujjar Singh died and a dispute over the succession of the territory of Gujjar Singh arose between his two sons Fateh Singh and Sahib Singh. Mahan Singh took the side of Fateh Singh with the result that war broke out between Sahib Singh and Mahan Singh. Mahan Singh demanded tribute from Sahib Singh as token of the former's suzerainty over Gujrat. Sahib Singh refused on the ground that Gujjar Singh was an adherent of Bhangi Misl and was never under the standard of Sukarchakia Misl. Sahib Singh's wife being the sister of Mahan Singh, tried her best to dissuade her brother to fight against her husband but Mahan Singh paid no heed. At long last Sahib Singh shut himself up in the Sodhra fort which was besieged. The siege continued for three months. The victory was within sight when unfortunately Mahan Singh was suddenly taken ill. The siege was raised and Mahan Singh was

removed to Gujranwala where he died shortly after (Baisakh 5, Sammat 1847—April 1790).<sup>1</sup>

Mahan Singh died young, at the age of only thirty. He was brave, enterprising and prudent beyond years. That he became one of the leading-most Sikh chiefs against very heavy odds, speaks volumes of his sterling qualities.

According to Hari Ram Gupta, "There is not the least doubt about it that if he (Mahan Singh) had lived ten years longer, he would have become the sole monarch of the whole northern India from the Khaibar pass to the Ganga, and from the Himalayas to the Arabian sea, and Emperor Shah Alam II would have become his protege."

James Brown in 1787, estimated the military strength of Mahan Singh at 15000 horse and 5000 foot in the Rachna Doab and Sind Sagar Doab.<sup>2</sup> Imam-ud-Din Hussaini wrote in 1796 that Mahan Singh commanded about 22000 horse and foot.<sup>3</sup> He left to his son and successor a state beset with dangers; but he bequeathed to him at the same time the qualities by which dangers are best overcome—courage combined with natural genius for command and enterprise tempered by prudence and foresight.<sup>4</sup>

The Sukarchakia Misl's holdings in 1780 consisted of Akalgarh, Daska, Goindke, Gujranwala, Hafizabad, Jamke, Karyal, Mandiala, Murliwala, Naushetra, Pasrur, Rangpur, Sandhanwalia, Sheikhupura, Sodhra, Tegha Mandiala in Rachna Doab and Bhera, Jalalpur, Khwaja Miani and salt range in Chaj Doab. In Sind Sagar Doab, Sukarchakia Misl held Chakwal Dhanni, Fatehbad, Jhelum, Kot Raja, Kot Sahib Khan, Makhad, Pind Dadan Khan, Pind Gheb, Pothohar and Sayyidpur.

Ranjit Singh succeeded to the chieftainship of the Misl after Mahan Singh. He was only ten when he was called upon to take the responsibility of running the affairs of the Misl. Undoubtedly Mahan Singh left to his son and successor a state, threatened by varied dangers, yet Ranjit Singh rose to the occasion and pace by pace consolidated the kingdom of the Punjab. His rule ushered in area of

1. J. Skinner, *Haqaeq-i-Rajgan* (M.S. Ganda Singh's Collection, Pbi. University, Patiala), 1830, p. 105; Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Twarikh*, II, p. 28; A letter by a Marathi Vakil at Delhi to the Peshwa at Poona in May, 1790—Its English version is in Ganda Singh's Collection at Pbi. University.
2. James Brown, 'History of the Origin and Progress of Sicks', *Early European Accounts of the Sicks* (edited by Ganda Singh), p. 43.
3. Imad-ud-Din Hussaini, *Tarikh-i-Hussaini, Shabi* (Mss) quoted by H.R. Gupta, op. cit., p. 313.
4. C.H. Pavne, op. cit.

peace, prosperity, pride, magnificence, security and stability.

## XII. Phulkian Misl<sup>1</sup>

### *Phul*

The founder of the Misl was Phul, a scion of the Sidhu branch of the Bhatti tribe. He was the thirteenth in descent from Jesal, the founder of Jesalmir. Phul seems to have displayed a liking for Sikh tenets and won the favour of Guru Har Rai who is said to have prophesied a great future for Phul and his descendants. Prophecy was amply fulfilled, because the sons of Phul became the ancestors of the ruling families of Patiala, Jind and Nabha, called after him the Phulkian States.

Phul was the second son of Rup Chand by his second wife, Mai Umbi and was born in Mehraj in A.D. 1619. He founded a village five miles distant from Mehraj, which he called after his name, Phul. The Delhi Emperor Shah Jahan by a *firman* confirmed him in the office which his ancestors had held.

As he developed his influence, he had to fight against Hayat Khan, the Bhatti chief of Bhatner, whom he defeated at Phakarsar in Bhatinda. Soon after this, he was defeated by Isa Khan of Isakhan village, who had been assisted by Hussain Khan of Kasur. The village of Phul was plundered by Isa Khan and Phul was compelled to retire to his old residence in Mehraj.

It was not long after that Phul gathered strength and declared war against Daulat Khan, the father of Isa Khan whom he defeated and recovered the village of Phul. After this, he again defeated Hayat Khan of Bhatner, whose nephews, Mahabat Khan and Mahabub Khan, he slew.

Shortly after this, he increased his power to this extent that he was considered to be a powerful chief. He withheld the payment of revenue to the Imperial Governor of Jagraon whom he defeated and made prisoner. He treated him with courtesy and released him some time after.

According to Latif, "The governor of Sirhind had placed him in confinement for his failure to pay the government revenue." He managed to seek his release through the help of Nawab Sher Muhammad of Malerkotla. He died in 1689 under mysterious circumstances.

1. Phulkian Misl was not a Misl strictly speaking. To call it a kingdom looks more appropriate.

### Rama

Phul was succeeded in the Sardari by his second son, Rama. He was constantly over-running the Bhatti country and he defeated Hussan Khan, the chief of the tribe near Chenab, carrying away much plunder, money, horses and cattle. He then made a raid into the territory of Isa Khan and defeated him. He also inflicted a crushing defeat on the chief of Kot.

He was a devout follower of Guru Gobind Singh and was always ready to do anything at his bidding. He was assassinated in 1714 at Malerkotla by the sons of Chain Singh in avengement of the death of their father which had been managed by Rama.

### Ala Singh (1714—1765)

He was succeeded by his third son Ala Singh, who was born in A.D. 1691<sup>1</sup> at village Phul. He had no regular schooling, yet according to the standards of times, he appeared to have learnt the art of fighting and the use of war implements current in those days. This training coupled with his sharp intellect, his physical strength and his daring and courage proved a great asset to him in his career.

At the age of sixteen, Ala Singh was married to Fateh Kaur, a daughter of Chaudhari Kala<sup>2</sup> of village Kaleke (near Dhanaula). This marriage proved very beneficial for Ala Singh. Fateh Kaur was a lady of sterling ability and helped her husband in administrative and political affairs. Besides this, she brought him into contact with her cousin Gurbakhsh Singh Kaleke who rendered great help to Ala Singh in founding Patiala and Bhai Dayal Das who had a great moral stature and whose son Bhai Gurbakhsh Singh was a great soldier. Rama, the father of Ala Singh, had been killed by the sons of Chain Singh. To avenge the death of the father was considered the most important task. Ala Singh along with his brother Sobha Singh attacked the village, Gurmati where Bir, Kamala and Ugarsen the sons of Chain Singh had gone. Bir and Kamala were killed and Ugarsen sought safety in flight to the village Sema (near Mehraj) which was also plundered and the family of Sema was

1. Atar Singh of Bhadaur says that Ala Singh was born in 1681. Muhammad Hasan puts his birth in 1695. We have followed Giani Gian Singh.
2. Dr. Kirpal Singh in his book *A Short Life Sketch of Maharaja Ala Singh*, 1953, edn; p. 2, calls her father Khanan. We have followed Karam Singh, State historian of Patiala.

turned out of Mehraj.

Ala Singh and his brothers wanted to have share of the village held commonly by Rama and Tiloka, but Tiloka manoeuvred the issue in such a way that Ala Singh and his brothers were scared away from Phul. Ala Singh went to Bhadaur and settled there.

The life at Bhadaur was not to the liking of Ala Singh owing to the dominating influence of his brother Dunna Singh. He was, therefore, on the look-out for an opportunity to leave Bhadaur. The opportunity came when there occurred a famine. The revenue due from Dunna Singh could not be realized. He was imprisoned along with his son, who died in prison. Ala Singh saved himself, from financial liability by leaving Bhadaur and shifting to Barnala fifteen miles from Bhadaur. The new environment favourably reacted upon his career. This happened in A.D. 1722.

After his settlement at Barnala, Ala Singh along with his brother pressed the demand for the division of the common ancestral villages which were under the occupation of the descendants of Tiloka. Unwillingly, they appointed Jog Raj and Kalla of village Dhanaula as arbitrators and the seventeen villages fell to the lot of the descendants of Rama out of which Barnala, Tapa, Khori, Tajokey, Khonse, Mehta, Aakalia, Pherwali, Hudiaya and Dhabali<sup>1</sup> were the most important.

These villages proved to be the nucleus for the Patiala state. If Ala Singh wanted to extend the frontiers of his territories, it was essential for him to combat against the Bhattis, the rulers of Malerkotla, the Rai of Kot, the Barars who did not like the rise of new power in the Malwa region of Punjab. Ala Singh, on his part, was quick to perceive all this in right perspective. He made large scale preparations.

The Rai of Kot felt upset at this. He collected a large force and assisted by Jaimal Khan, chief of Malerkotla and Nawab Asad Ali Khan, the Imperial faujdar of Jullundur Doab attacked Ala Singh at Barnala. After a hard contest Ala Singh carried the day. Asad Ali Khan was slain, his troops fled and their example was followed by the rest. This victory was gained by Ala Singh in A.D. 1731.

The battle of Barnala proved to be a turning point in the career of Ala Singh. This battle exalted him to the position of

1. Before the division of the possessions, Ala Singh had already conquered Barnala and Tapa whereas his brother Sobha Singh had the possession of Dhabali and Hudiaya. The village Dhabali was occupied by Man Singh (son of Bakhta Singh) his nephew, after the death of Sobha Singh.



powerful chief of the cis-Sutlej territory. Besides this, it encouraged him to make further conquests and it laid the foundation-stone of his territorial acquisitions. Again, it was this battle which brought him in closer contact with the Dal Khalsa with whose help he was still to win laurels. In short this battle proved to be the seed of his future greatness. According to Lepel Griffin, "This brilliant success at once made a great improvement in the position of Ala Singh. He was looked upon as one of the most rising chiefs and many Zamindars from across Sutlej came to Barnala to take service with him." According to Muhammad Latif, "His fame reached Delhi and the Emperor Muhammad Shah deputed the viceroy, Mir Mannu and Sami Yar Khan with a *firman* (dated 21st Ramzan 1137 H.) asking Ala Singh to assist in the management of Sirhind, and promising him of the title of 'Raja', if he acquitted himself to the satisfaction of the Imperial court." But the close scrutiny of the *firman* in the light of the historical circumstances leads us to the conclusion that the *firman* was not a genuine one and hence the statement of Muhammad Latif is not correct.

Ala Singh now made war on the Bhattis who were his hereditary enemies. Mohan, the grandfather of Phul, was killed by them and so was killed Rup Chand by them. After the foundation of Longowal, Ala Singh was closely watching the activities of the Bhattis and was on the look-out for some opportunity to stem back the tide of the Bhatti aggression. He got this opportunity when the Dal Khalsa moved to the cis-Sutlej territory owing to the policy of ruthless persecution followed by the Lahore governor Zakariya Khan.

Ala Singh invited the Dal into his territory and with its help attacked the Bhatti chiefs. Allahdad Khan Biowala, Inayat Khan, and Vilayat Khan of Budhiala and Bahar Khan of Harriaho. The Dal Khalsa exacted tribute from Bhatti territory. The sultry warfare continued for more than ten years. Ala Singh was successful in breaking the spell of Bhatti power.

After his successful campaigns against the Bhattis, Ala Singh undertook to colonize the land and founded villages in the areas which were previously under the influence of the Bhattis. The villages Chhajli, Dirba, Sheron were cases in point.

Another important acquisition during the period was the acquisition of Dodan, modern Bhawanigarh which in the subsequent years proved to be the most important base for carrying on the war against the Bhattis. "Dodan was originally

founded by Sobha Singh, the elder brother of Ala Singh. He died issueless in 1744 A.D. leaving behind his wife Begi and his daughter-in-law Resan, wife of Jodha, his deceased son. Ala Singh's son Sardul Singh married Resan by the Karewa custom. This marriage brought to Ala Singh what formed the estate of Sobha Singh.

Ali Muhammad Khan was appointed the faujdar of Sirhind in A.D. 1745.<sup>1</sup> He was daring and brave. On reaching Sirhind, he summoned the refractory Zamindars Ala Singh, Pahara Mal of Rajpur, Rai Kalha, Nigahia Mal chief of Jodhmansur, and others to attend at his place and to pay arrears of the revenue due from them on pain of expulsion from their estates. These Zamindars were reluctant to pay the dues. Ali Muhammad got enraged and ordered Hafiz Rehmat to chastise them to submission. Rai Hafiz was successful in his objective. He defeated Pahara Mal, Nagahia and Rai Kalha and compelled them to pay the revenue.

Ala Singh was, however, arrested when he, in response to the call of Ali Muhammad Khan, went to Sirhind. Had Ala Singh not responded to the call, some military action would certainly have been taken against him just as it was done in case referred to above. The reason for the arrest of Ala Singh was obvious that Ala Singh did not agree to give the amount demanded from him. After the arrest of Ala Singh, Barnala was plundered and his family was rendered destitute.

Ala Singh remained in confinement from the end of 1745 to the beginning of A.D. 1748 first in the fort of Sirhind and then in the fort of Sunam.

The release of Ala Singh was brought about by Karam Singh, the grandson of Ala Singh and great grandson of Sema. This he did with a view to bringing about rapprochement between the two warring families, the family of Sema and the family of Rama. Karam Singh planned the flight of Ala Singh from the fort of Sunam with the help of Jiwan Singh Randhawa and others. Karam Singh himself stole into the fort. He wore the dress of Ala Singh and took his seat. Ala Singh came out secretly and reached the appointed place. *Tammak* was beaten as a signal for the safe arrival of Ala Singh. On hearing the sound of *Tammak*, Karam Singh jumped out of the fort and joined the party which proceeded to Longowal. Soon the guard of the fort set out in their pursuit; but by that time, Ala

---

1. J.N. Sirkar, *Fall of Mughal Empire*, Vol. 1.  
*Tazkiru-i-Anand Ram*.

Singh had received reinforcement and safely reached Longowal.

Ali Muhammad Khan did not take any action against Ala Singh. The only reason for his keeping quiet was that he himself was preparing to leave Sirhind. The rumour was afloat about Ahmad Shah Abdali's invasion of India and Ali Muhammad Khan fled away from Sirhind in the middle of February 1748.

Ala Singh played a prominent part during the fight of the Mughals against Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1748. Ala Singh cut off the supplies of Abdali's forces deployed to dislodge the Mughals from their entrenched position at Manupur. Ala Singh's efforts to make successful the economic blockade of Abdali's army did not remain unrecognised. Prince Ahmad greatly appreciated the courage, valour and audacity of Ala Singh and in token thereof gave him a robe of honour (Khillat). This thing raised the prestige of Ala Singh in the eyes of the chieftains of the area.

After this Ala Singh turned his attention to the expansion of his territory. He chastised Jodha who had incited Ala Singh's subjects to rise against him. He defeated and killed Farid Khan who resided in the village of Kakra, two miles from Dodan and was the holder of about one-fourth of the pargana of Samana. Immediately after this, he built a fort at Bhawanigarh. This fort proved very important base for further extension of his territories towards Munak which was taken by Lal Singh, the youngest son of Ala Singh. The Mohammad Salah Khokhar of pargana of Sanaur, also known as Chaurasi because it consisted of eighty-four villages, also accepted over-lordship of Ala Singh.

Near Sanaur about 5 km north-west, there was a large tract full of Mango groves and orchards of Guavas and Ber trees. It belonged to Sodhi Khatries. It had also got a small habitation of Mann Jat cultivators. Gurbakhsh Singh captured a fort known as Sodhian di Garhi in 1753. The area was afterwards called by the people Patti Alha, which became Patiala as time lapsed. Ala Singh shifted his capital to the new town in February 1764 from Barnala (Magh Sudi 10, Sammat 1820).

Next Ala Singh assisted by Dal Khalsa defeated the Bhattis. Bhatti leaders of Budhlada, Inayat Khan and Walayat Khan were defeated and killed. Similarly, Tohana and Jaimalpur were wrested from Bhattis. Amin Khan Bhatti of Bhatner who considered it not only a great material loss but also a great humiliation and insult to the pride of the Bhattis, invaded the territory of Ala Singh. A hard-contested battle was fought at village Khudal, mid-way

between Budhlada and Munak, in which Muhammad Amin Khan lost the day. As a result of the battle a large tract of land was added to the Ala Singh's dominion.

In the next three years (1755—58) the territory south of the Sutlej had a very uneasy time. It saw the struggle for power between Qutab Shah and Sadiq Beg who was the faujdar of Sirhind. Ala Singh wisely observed perfect neutrality during the armed conflict between Adina Beg and Qutab Shah and saved his territory from destruction.

In A.D. 1757, as a result of the invasion of Abdali, the territory of Ala Singh was transferred to the Indian dominion of Ahmad Shah Abdali. Ahmad Shah Abdali appointed Abdul Samad Khan as the governor of Sirhind. Muhammad Amin Khan Bhatti married his daughter to him and he became naturally inclined towards his father-in-law, at whose instigation he marched on Ala Singh's territory. Ala Singh, considering the fort of Patiala insecure, shifted to the fort of Dodan (Bhawanigarh). Abdul Samad Khan besieged the fort. Ala Singh invited the Marathas to invade the Sirhind, This clever move had the desired effect. When Abdul Samad received the report about Maratha advance towards Sirhind, he immediately retired to his headquarters. Sirhind was sacked and Abdul Samad Khan was arrested and taken to Lahore as prisoner in the Maratha camp.

Soon after, Abdul Samad Khan escaped from the Maratha camp and joined his old ally Muhammad Amin Khan. In the meantime, Amin Khan had successfully attacked the Imperial camp which had encouraged him too much. Now he, at the head of huge army, marched towards Ala Singh's territory. Ala Singh encountered the Bhatti forces at Rampur, near modern Akalgarh. With this victory, Bhattis' opposition wore down and Ala Singh entered upon the course of sovereignty. Previously Ala Singh did not own any big fort and consolidated his possession by building mud forts. After the battle, Ala Singh occupied the Sunam fort, a fort which enabled him to claim for himself the position of a big chief.

In the year 1761, in the battle of Panipat, Ala Singh helped the Marathas by providing them food-grains and fodder. Ahmad Shah Abdali, therefore while returning to his own country, plundered Barnala, Ala Singh's chief town. It was the most critical time as the estate of Ala Singh was at the mercy of the victor of Panipat. Under such circumstances, Fateh Kaur acted very wisely.

She deputed Biram Dhillon, Bhola Singh, Kahna Mal and Kashmiri to start negotiations with the Afghan invader. The deputationists approached Shah Wali Khan, the Wazir of the Shah and were successful in concluding peace. As per settlement Ala Singh presented personally four lakhs of rupees as tribute. Now the Afghan Emperor adopted the policy of reconciliation with Ala Singh as he wanted to win him over to his side. He, therefore, issued a *firman* on March 29, 1761 to newly-appointed governor of Sirhind, Zain Khan, to treat Ala Singh as an independent chief and to consider his enemies as enemies and his friends as friends. Ala Singh was honoured with a robe of honour and was confirmed with 726 villages as his possession. The robe of honour and respect of independence greatly helped Ala Singh in stabilizing his power.

Soon after the departure of Ahmad Shah Abdali from India, Ala Singh had to face another danger, this time from his co-religionists who declaimed that he had betrayed them by accepting the robe of honour from Ahmad Shah Abdali. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, however, came to his rescue and explained to the Sikhs that his policy towards the Afghan king was due to political expediency. He assured the Dal of Ala Singh's whole-hearted co-operation as he had done earlier.

In 1762, Ahmad Shah Abdali again invaded India, this time mainly to punish Sikhs who had not allowed his viceregents to administer his Indian territories peacefully. The Sikhs numbering about one lakh were resting at village Kup when Ahmad Shah Abdali, pounced upon them (February 5, 1762). The Sikhs were unprepared; but still they fought well and in running fight from Kup to Bamala they were badly defeated losing thousands killed and wounded. Ala Singh was taken prisoner. The Afghan Emperor, overwhelmed by the idea of *Jehad* against the Sikhs, ordered that Ala Singh's long hair should be cut. Ala Singh who, like all devout Sikhs, considered *Kesas* as the gift of the tenth Guru, offered to pay the cost. This he did because he knew the greedy nature of the Abdali. Abdali agreed to the suggestion of Ala Singh and allowed him to retain his hair at the cost of one lakh and twenty thousand rupees.<sup>1</sup> Later on Ala Singh saw the Emperor with Najib-ud-Daula, the right hand man of Abdali in India. The Shah realised five lakhs of rupees as tribute. He wanted more. Ala Singh was,

1. *Tahmas Namah*, Tahmas Khan, p. 114.

Also refer to *Tarikh-i-Salatin-i-Afghana*.



therefore, taken to Lahore in the Shah's tram where he was released on security.

The Sikhs, however, could not be subdued or deterred from their activities. They had special grudge against Zain Khan, the governor of Sirhind because he played a great part in inviting Ahmad Shah Abdali. Soon after the Dal Khalsa decided to punish Zain Khan. Ala Singh also joined the punitive expedition. Zain Khan was killed on the 4th January, 1764. Ala Singh was greatly benefited by this victory of the Sikhs over Zain Khan. The fall of Sirhind destroyed the last vestige of the prestige of Afghan rule in cis-Sutlej territory and increased the prestige of Ala Singh to such an extent that he started the mint, and struck his own coin.

The news of the sack of Sirhind and of the defeat and death of Zain Khan greatly annoyed the Abdali who again invaded India for the seventh time. On his way to Lahore, he was continuously harassed by the Sikhs. From Lahore to Sirhind Kunjpura and then from that place to Sirhind the hovering bands of the Sikhs sufficiently teased him. He could find no opportunity to draw the Sikhs in a body and then to kill them. He saw for himself the devastated Sirhind and he was convinced of the invincibility of the Sikhs, the nation at arms in open hostility. Now he resorted to the policy of divide at Empire i.e. to win to his side one section of the Sikhs by giving them power. He called Ala Singh and appointed him as the governor of Sirhind on the condition that he would pay three and a half lakhs of rupees to the Shah as annual tribute.

He was honoured with the title of Maharaja and granted the insignia of royalty, kettle-drum and banner. Ahmad Shah Abdali wanted a heavy tribute for his favours but Ala Singh could pay one lakh and eighty thousand rupees. The Shah was not pleased and arrested Ala Singh. When Abdali reached Lahore, he released Ala Singh, asking him to remit the balance of payment of a hundi which he later did.

Now Maharaja Ala Singh took effective measures for the better administration of the cis-Sutlej territory. He in order to protect his territory, created military posts at Sadhaura, Buria, Shahbad, Ropar and Panjaur.

The Dal Khalsa was enraged at his new arrangement. Various Sardars who had taken possession of territories in the cis-Sutlej area did not like the supremacy of Ala Singh in that area. Nor could they recognise Abdali as their over-lord. The manifest policy of



the Maharaja Ala Singh of placating the Afghan invader stood in open conflict to the general policy of the Khalsa. In the eyes of the one section of the Khalsa, Maharaja Ala Singh's alliance was nothing less than the treason against the Guru and the Panth, and they wanted to give exemplary punishment to him. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia interposed and persuaded the Sikhs to avoid civil war. Maharaja Ala Singh also did not want to precipitate the issue. He explained to them that he had done all this under force of circumstances. In order to enable the Sikh Sardars to occupy their respective territories according to the previous arrangements and undertakings, he demolished the military posts. He also agreed to help the Dal Khalsa in their campaigns across the Jamuna. Even then Hari Singh Bhangi, the leader of Taruna Dal attacked Ala Singh's troops and in the engagement he had to lose his life.

Soon after on 22nd of August 1765<sup>1</sup> A.D., Maharaja Ala Singh died of short illness. His body was cremated in the fort Mubarak in Patiala, where now a Gurdwara stands as a memorial to the great warrior-builder.

After Ala Singh his grandson Amar Singh succeeded. He also continued to maintain friendly relations with the Durrani.

### *Maharaja Amar Singh (1765—81)*

Ala Singh was succeeded by his grandson Amar Singh son of Sardul Singh. The elder brother of Amar Singh, Himmat Singh born to Sardul Singh's second wife who was his brother's widow, contested the succession, but owing to the military help extended by the rulers of Jind, Kaithal and Nabha to Amar Singh, he failed in his mission. Then through the affectionate mediation of Rani Fatto, widely esteemed wife of Ala Singh, things were settled amicably. Bhawanigarh fort with Dhoda pargana was given to Himmat Singh as a Jagir who felt satisfied and hereafter he never created any trouble for Raja Amar Singh.

Raja Amar Singh was only eighteen when he assumed rulership of Patiala state. He had the good fortune to receive baptism from *Panj Payaras* among whom was included Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. Because his political farsightedness had convinced him that Patiala rulers had great potential to play a significant role in Sikh struggle especially in cis-Sutlej region, he attended the coronation of Amar Singh and promised him his moral support

1. Kahan Singh, *Jiwan Britant Maharaja Ala Singh*, p. 24.

whenever it was warranted. Amar Singh on his part pledged to offer a fixed amount annually, which Khushwaqt Rai erroneously called a tribute.

Towards the close of 1765, Raja Amar Singh seized 70 villages of Malerkotla including Sherpur, Payal, Banur, Mansurpur. The Malerkotla forces put up a brave fight near Isru. The Raja being doubtful of his victory invited Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. Upon his arrival, the tables were turned in his favour and Malerkotla forces were thoroughly bashed and defeated. In gratitude of Ahluwalia, the Raja gave him one-fourth of the total revenue of Isru pargana. A little after, Baghel Singh Karor Singhia suggested to Jassa Singh Ahluwalia to divide the Patiala State between themselves. Jassa Singh spurned the proposal. This act overwhelmed the Raja who decided to assign the whole of the income of the Isru pargana superseding his earlier decision of laying aside only one-fourth of the income for Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. The Raja lost no time to construct a fort at Amargarh, 25 km from Malerkotla to take care of the law and order situation in the newly acquired territories and to safe-guard it from covetous glances of the Malerkotla ruler.

Raja Amar Singh who had an uncanny sense of understanding of circumstances was convinced that he would have to keep Delhi rulers in good humour. He, therefore, rarely annoyed Najib-ud-Daula the deputy of Ahmad Shah Abdali at Delhi. At times he even extended help to him when he was pitted against the forces of Dal Khalsa.

In 1767 when Ahmad Shah Abdali invaded India, Amar Singh sent his Wakil Himmat Singh to present five thousand rupees, two horses, and Nazar to the Shah. On Abdali's return journey, Amar Singh joined him at Ambala and made available to him requisite quantity of provisions. At Sirhind, he expressed his desire to see the Abdali in person. He was allowed to see him but on the condition that he would wait upon him with his head entirely Shaven.

This was indeed too much for Amar Singh to pocket for, that meant the renouncement of his faith. At this critical moment, Rani Fatto moved fast and adroitly. She won over Shah Wali Khan, the prime minister of Abdali and Jahan Khan, commander-in-chief of the Afghan forces. Both these personages used their influence with Abdali who ultimately agreed to spare the sacred hair of Amar Singh but only after getting a huge sum of three lakhs of rupees which stood arrears of his tribute. The Raja paid the amount and

pledged perennial fidelity to him. The Abdali felt satisfied and conferred upon him a robe of honour and a very exalted title 'Raja-i-Rajgan' understandably to turn him as his agent and well-wisher. The title had significant political overtone, it implied that Amar Singh was obligated to establish his hegemony on other Phulkian chiefs and Sardars in the cis-Sutlej region.

Out of gratitude for the prime minister, the Raja added Bamezei as suffix to his name, as it was the name of the clan of the prime minister. He inscribed Amar Singh Bamezei on his official seal. He issued coins in the name of Ahmad Shah Abdali. His silver coin known as Raja Shahi Rupee was of the value of one rupee of the British period and his gold coin Raja Shahi Ashrafi could fetch fifteen rupees. Both the coins bore the following inscription :

Sikka zad az Qadir-i-Bechun Ba Ahmad Badshah  
Sikka Zan bar Sim-o-Zar az Mauj-e-Māhitā Bamāh  
[The peerless God ordered King Ahmad to strike coins  
on silver and gold (to make them current from sun) to  
moon.]

The obverse of the coin had the year and place of minting : San Jalus Mamanat Mānūs Zarab Sirhind. Amar Singh's coins were marked by a Kalghi or small aigrette plume. No alteration in the inscription was ever made by Amar Singh and his son, Sahib Singh. Only some changes were made in the marks to distinguish each ruler. Sahib Singh's coins had a two edged sword (Saif).

Next year, i.e. in 1768, Amar Singh helped the Raja of Nahan in his ambition to capture Pinjore from Garib Das who had occupied it and the whole pargana of Manimajra in 1769 at the fall of Sirhind. Pinjore was captured but after suffering a huge loss. The Patiala general lost 200 men in this campaign. Garib Das allied himself with Hari Singh of Sialba and Ropar and attacked Pinjore. Though he did not succeed in recovering Pinjore but he occupied Chandigarh close to Manimajra and created disturbances in Banur pargana. This annoyed Raja Amar Singh who first attacked Manimajra and then Sialba. Garib Das sued for peace but Hari Singh supported by his allies Karam Singh Shaheed, Gurbakhsh Singh Ambala, Karam Singh Nirmala of Shahbad Markanda, Gurdit Singh of Ladwa, Diwan Singh of Sikandra and Rai Singh and Bhag Singh of Buryia routed troops of Patiala state.

Much agonised at his discomfiture, Amar Singh sought the help of Rajinder Kaur of Phagwara, Bhais of Kaithal, Rajas of

Nabha, Jind and Nahan, rulers of Malerkotla, Tara Singh Ghaiba and Budh Singh Faizulpuria. Budh Singh Faizulpuria, Saundha Singh of Khanna and others compelled Hari Singh to offer a large tribute. He, however, could not occupy Sialba or Ropar. He gained nothing out of this desultory warfare.

In 1767-68 Amar Singh seized various villages of other Sardars, including those of Baghel Singh Karorsinghia. Baghel Singh got annoyed and in combination with some Sardars (whose territories had been grabbed by Amar Singh) attacked and fought against Amar Singh at Ghuram near Patiala. The Raja had to sue for peace. He got his son Sahib Singh baptised by Baghel Singh just to keep him in good humour.

In 1771, he attacked Bhatinda. Sukhchain Singh, its chieftain was overpowered. He was allowed to keep only 24 villages; the rest were annexed to Patiala territory.

Amar Singh also tried to capture Kot Kapura but failed. Jodh Singh, its chieftain captured many of his horses and just to irritate him, he named a horse and a mare as 'Ala' and 'Fatto' respectively. Amar Singh led a strong force against him. He succeeded to kill Jodh Singh in a surprise attack on him but came back without annexing Kot Kapura.

In 1774, Raja Amar Singh fought against the Bhattis in the district of Hissar. Several engagements took place. The Raja suffered a lot both in men and war equipage. Prince Himmat Singh tried to achieve something solid. In engagements that took place at Fatehbad, Bohya, Rori and Rania, Moonak and near Tohana thousands of the soldiers were killed on both sides. Himmat Singh also lost his life in the final engagement.

In the winter of 1778, Amar Singh again opened his campaigns against Bhattis. This time he succeeded in subduing Begra, Fatehbad, Sirsa and Bhatner situated a little distant from the western border of Sirsa district. He then besieged Rania, 14 km west of Sirsa. Muhammad Amin Khan put up a stout resistance, but ultimately he had to submit to the Raja. By March 1779, most of Bhatti chiefs accepted his suzerainty. In this task he was helped by Jassa Singh Ramgarhia.

In 1779, Abdul Ahad Khan led a campaign against cis-Sutlej chiefs. What prompted Ahad Khan to undertake this campaign? Financial stringency seemed to be the foremost factor that motivated him. The invitation of Raja Amar Singh to attack certain Sikh chieftains in cis-Sutlej region who were his adversaries formed

another factor. Still another factor was the continuous goading of the certain Sikh Sardars who were present at Delhi in 1779, that his campaign would be highly rewarding.

Abdul Ahad Khan got tempted, especially when he found that the Sikh chieftains were a disunited lot and many of them were willing to play his game.

He, therefore, launched his campaign on 18th June, 1779. At Thanesar Raja Amar Singh sent his Vakil Nanu Mal and his son-in-law Mehar Singh. They offered on behalf of the Raja, banker's bills to the value of five lakhs and an extra sum of Rs. 25,000 as a Nazar for the prince, Mirza Jahan Shah Farkhandah Bakhsh who had been accompanying him, but Abdul Ahad Khan insisted on Amar Singh's personal presence in the Imperial camp. Nanu Mal explained that on account of the news of certain Sikh Sardars likely to march upon Patiala, he was not in a position to come personally. In September, Nanu Mal raised the sum of the tribute to seven lakhs saying, "Raja Amar Singh is loyal to you in every way; but he is not coming to an audience as his enemies are with you. Please take seven lakhs of rupees and retire." The Nawab demanded thirty lakhs; but without waiting for a definite reply advanced to Patiala. A battle took place near Patiala. The Raja's forces suffered a defeat. Then the Nawab besieged the fort Mubark at Patiala. He failed to storm it forthwith. This caused restlessness in his army, leading to a mutiny between Afghan and Mughal soldiers. The Sikh chieftains in his camp deserted. Baghel Singh Karorsinghia persuaded him to retire before the cis-Sutlej Sikhs reached Patiala. The Nawab hastily retired, gaining nothing and exposing himself and his forces to the sporadic attacks of the Sikhs. He reached Panipat on 18th October and heaved a sigh of relief.

Raja Amar Singh, being an astute diplomat did not want to give impression that he defied Delhi authority. At the end of January, 1780, he deputed his Vakil to the prime minister Najaf Khan at Delhi to offer his submission. Najaf Khan in token of having appreciated Amar Singh's gesture, gave Khillats (robes of honour) two for Amar Singh, two for Gajpat Singh of Jind, two for the Vakil and two for the daughter of Amar Singh and Gajpat Singh who were to be married shortly.

In February 1781, the Imperial general Shafi Khan led a campaign in the cis-Sutlej territory to exact tribute from Sikh chieftains. On the way, he was so much harassed by the Sikhs that he solicited aid from Raja Amar Singh. The Raja deputed his

representative Chain Singh to the general to work out the mode of aid. The general honoured Chain Singh by giving him doshala and a goshwara, a jewelled ornament for the turban and sent him back with detailed instructions. The meeting between Chain Singh and the general took place at village Nakri. On receipt of the details and a Khillat from the general, Amar Singh left Patiala at the head of a force to join Shafi Khan. Karam Singh of Shahbad and Tara Singh Ghaiba, however, checkmated him on the way and he was not allowed to cross Ambala. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia entered Amar Singh's territory and threatened to march upon Patiala. The Raja had to suspend the march and made peace with Sardar Ahluwalia by agreeing to wait upon him at Khanna.

Shortly after Amar Singh passed away in 1781. He was only thirty-four when he died. Indisputably, he made Patiala the most powerful state between the Jamuna and Sutlej. It can be safely presumed that if his life had been spared for another twenty years, there might have been two Sikh kingdoms, the Lahore kingdom extending upto Sutlej and Patiala kingdom between the Jamuna and Sutlej and from the Shivalik hills to the desert of Bikaner. The British government might have halted at Delhi, being satisfied at the emergence of a buffer state between Lahore and Delhi.

### *Sahib Singh*

Raja Amar Singh was succeeded by his six years old son, Sahib Singh. During his minority as well as after attaining maturity, he was served with utmost loyalty and sincerity by his grandmother Rani Hukman, Nanu Mal and Rajinder Kaur first cousin of Raja Amar Singh and his brilliant sister Rani Sahib Kaur. All these four towering personalities were in the grip of acute dejection when they expired.

On the death of Raja Amar Singh, and a little later of Rani Hukman, the state of Patiala received terrible shocks. The subordinate chiefs of Patiala declared their independence. No revenue could be collected. Some members of the royal family appropriated cash, gold and jewellery in the state treasury. Hari Singh of Ropar, Baghel Singh Karorsinghia, Bhai Lal Singh, Mohar Singh Nishanwalia, Khushal Singh Singhpuria grabbed different villages of Patiala State. Sahib Singh being immature in his minority, and imbecile even after attaining maturity, was a misfit to deal with such a critical situation.

Luckily for the state Nanu Mal who was his prime minister



grappled with the situation. He led an expedition against Hari Singh of Ropar and wrested back the villages of Patiala State that he had occupied, although in the fight he was severely wounded. He deserved admiration for his exertions but sadly enough, the ladies of the royal household conspired and got him imprisoned immediately after his recovery from the wounds.

In 1785, Raja Sahib Singh and his Bakhshi quarrelled over the question of roll call of the troops. The Bakhshi threw all scruples to wind and slapped the Raja who went weeping to his mother. The queen mother arrested Bakhshi. At this Bakhshi's relatives, who held the charge of four forts approached Baghel Singh Karorsinghia and Rai Singh Bhangi to take over their possessions. Both these Sardars very promptly established their control over them. Sahib Singh invited Jai Singh Kanhiya, his sister's uncle-in-law to help him out of the difficulty. He did not come forthwith as he could not, because he was in mourning on account of the sudden death of Hakikat Singh, who was Sahib Kaur's son-in-law. The Bakhshi's relatives invited Khushal Singh Singhpuria who carried fire and sword in the Patiala territory and seized some places such as Banur.

At this juncture, Rajinder Kaur came to the rescue of Sahib Singh. She collected a force and marched from Phagwara where she was married. On reaching Patiala she reappointed Nanu Mal to the post of Prime Minister.

Nanu's first priority was to recover the lost territories. To this purpose, he invited Dhar Rao from Delhi on promise of three lakhs of rupees and Rs. 5000 per day to meet the expenses of troops.

In October 1785, Dhar Rao advanced northward. Diwan Nanu Mal, Rani Rajinder Kaur and Raja Gopal Singh of Jind received him at Thanesar. Baghel Singh made his submission and returned the captured territory of Patiala. As the combined forces turned towards Kaithal, its ruler Lal Singh surrendered Patiala territory to Nanu Mal and also paid tribute to Dhar Rao. Mohan Singh Nishanwalia also returned the villages occupied by him earlier. When the forces reached the Banur territory, Khushal Singh Singhpuria parted with the Patiala villages. Dhar Rao was offered a sum of 5 lakhs of rupees and he returned to Karnal in January 1786. In this journey Gajpat Singh was taken ill and he died at Safidon on 18th January 1786.

Dhar Rao's expedition in cis-Sutlej region whetted the appetite of the Marathas. In May 1787, Ambaji Ingle led a special

task force to collect tribute from the Sikh chieftains. His movement did cause convulsions among the Sikh chiefs and Nanu Mal hastened to make settlement with him. But as the news had leaked that Mahadji Sindhia had asked Ambaji to join him in the campaign against Jaipur, the Sikh chieftains including Nanu Mal delayed negotiation till he had to withdraw from cis-Sutlej region.

In December, 1790 Rane Khan another Maratha general marched to Patiala. He laid waste the Patiala territory. He demanded a very heavy amount which was beyond the paying capacity of Sahib Singh. At this juncture Rajinder Kaur took a bold step. She at the head of military guard visited the Maratha camp, offered Rs. 6000 to Rane Khan and promised to pay the tribute after personally setting the amount with Mahadji Sindhia, then encamped at Mathura. Rane Khan marched back taking along with him Rajinder Kaur, Nanu Mal, his son Devi Ditta and Rai Ahmad of Jagraon. Rai Ahmad escaped at Panipat. Nanu Mal was allowed to go from Delhi to collect funds. Rani Rajinder Kaur and Devi Ditta were taken to Mathura. Mahadji Sindhia treated them respectfully and allowed Rajinder Kaur to go in July 1791 and Devi Ditta shortly after on receipt of a very huge sum from Nanu Mal.

Palace intrigues so poisoned the mind of Maharaja Sahib Singh that he dismissed Nanu Mal and appointed his sister Sahib Kaur to his place. Nanu Mal's property was confiscated and he had to leave the state to take shelter at Malerkotla where he died on 21st November 1791. Rajinder Kaur was met with discourtesy when she came back from Mathura. She suffered a shock of her life and died at Patiala after a brief ailment in 1791.

Rani Rajinder Kaur was one of the most remarkable women of her age. She possessed all the virtues which men pretend are their own—courage, perseverance and sagacity—without any mixture of the weakness which men attribute to women.<sup>1</sup>

Sahib Kaur was the elder child of Raja Amar Singh. She was married at the age of seven to Jaimal Singh, three years her senior, son of Hakikat Singh Kanhiya of Fatehgarh near Dinanagar (Gurdaspur district). She managed the affairs both in the office and battlefield most successfully. As an administrator, a general and a diplomat, she was in no way less than her aunt, Rani Rajinder Kaur.

Shortly after her assumption of the office, her husband was

---

1. Lepel Griffin, *Rajas of the Punjab*, op. cit., p. 67.

imprisoned by his cousin, Fateh Singh. She hurried to Fatehgarh and after a vehement assault not only liberated her husband but also restored to him the independent charge of Fatehgarh.

In 1794, a large Maratha force under Anta Rao and Lachhman Rao crossed the Jamuna and marched towards Patiala. Sahib Kaur got ready to oppose them and requested Kanhiya Sardars to help her. In the meanwhile the Maratha generals abandoned their plan, as they had to attend to some other more important tasks.

Next year Nana Rao another Maratha general at the head of 12000 men marched to Patiala. Sahib Kaur kept her cool and courage. She enlisted the military support of the chiefs of Bhadaur, Jind, Kalsia and Thanesar. The total military strength which she mustered was 7000. She met the enemy near Mardanpur village, 35 km away from Patiala. Despite hard fighting the Sikhs were defeated.

The Sikhs fell back towards Rajpura. Disheartened and demoralised, they wanted to return to Patiala. At this critical moment, Sahib Kaur jumped out of her chariot with her sword and shouted, "My brave soldiers! Never, ever I will turn my back on the enemy. I would rather perish than leaving the battlefield. I am pledged to fight to the last. Would you like to watch a lady courting death while fighting, and be disgraced for ever for having sacrificed a woman in the battleground?"

She stood firm with a face glowing with rage and with naked sword in her hands. She was twenty-two then. Her bold demeanour touched the hearts of the soldiers and tinkered the pride of Sardars. The Sikh forces were re-organised in the night. Next morning, they attacked the advance guard of the Maratha under Phalke. Soon after, the remaining Maratha army joined them. The fight continued till evening. At the fall of night, Sikhs returned to their camp; but then suddenly they attacked Madho Rao who was busy cremating the dead bodies of his soldiers. The Maratha Infantry Battalion engaged them and constrained them from entering their camp. Before dawn the Sikhs again made an attack. After this Nana Rao abandoned the project and returned to Karnal.

In 1798-99, Sahib Kaur's grit and diplomacy did not allow George Thomas, an Irish adventurer to conquer Jind. She herself commanded 9000 troops and dislodged George Thomas from his position around the fort of Jind. She then played a leading role in bringing about a settlement between George Thomas and other Sikh Sardars including Raja of Jind. Sahib Kaur signed the

settlement as Prime Minister on behalf of Sahib Singh who otherwise did not like the treaty.

During Shah Zaman's third and fourth invasions, Sahib Singh kept aloof from the struggle in which the Sikh chiefs in Trans-Sutlej region were engaged. The Rajas of Patiala had risen to their exalted positions owing to the favours conferred upon them by Ahmad Shah Durrani and consequently they did not want to snap their relations with the family of the Durrani.

In due course of time, Sahib Singh developed hatred for Sahib Kaur. Many factors conspired to poison the mind of the Maharaja. The courtiers including his wife Aus Kaur complained that Sahib Kaur attached no importance to the Maharaja in the management of state affairs. Secondly, Sahib Kaur had kept for herself the beautiful elephant which had been given by the ruler of Nahan for the Maharaja. Thirdly, she had built a fort at village Ubbewal in the present district of Sangrur without Maharaja's permission.

Sahib Singh arrested her and imprisoned her at Patiala. George Thomas in response to her appeal for help, attacked Patiala State and forced Sahib Singh to release her. He again imprisoned her in the fort of Patiala. She managed to escape to Ubbewal. She was immediately caught and jailed in Bhawanigarh fort to languish there till she died in 1799 at the young age of twenty-six. This was how John of Arc of the Sikhs met his tragic finale.

In 1796, Sahib Singh along with Raja Rai Singh and Sher Singh Bhangi attended the Kumbh Fair in April 1796. There were about 25 lakh pilgrims. The whole fair was managed by Gosains. The most religious among them, called 'Mamgas' being clad in sunshine controlled the traffic and maintained peace and order. A large number of Udasi Sikhs also came to attend the fair to preach the gospel of Nanak among the people. The Gosains felt offended, pulled their tents, removed their flag and insultingly drove them away. The chief of Udasis rushed to the Sikh camp at Jawalapur and told Raja Sahib Singh, how shabbily they were treated by the Gosains. The Raja got piqued up. He divided the entire body of his soldiers with units assigning each one the place to attack. According to Hardwicke, about five hundred of the Sadhus were cut to pieces and a large number of them were drowned while crossing the river.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh visited Patiala in July 1806 to mediate between Sahib Singh and Jaswant Singh of Nabha in a dispute over

a village named Dalaudi. Ranjit Singh visited Patiala in the next year on the invitation of Sahib Singh to resolve the dispute between the Raja of Patiala and his wife named Aus Kaur. On both the occasions, Sahib Singh gave a befitting reception to Ranjit Singh.

With the treaty of Amritsar (25th April 1809) concluded between Ranjit Singh and the East India Company, the cis-Sutlej territories including Sahib Singh's state of Patiala, passed under the protection of the East India Company.

Patiala State included the pargana of Bhatinda, Huriya, Barnala, Sherpur, Sunam, Mansurpur, Dhodian, Munak, Dirbah, Samana, Sanaur, Patiala, Ghanaur, Rajgarh, Mardanpur. Lalru, Banur, Chhat, Sirhind, Payal, Amargarh, Lasoi and Gharuan.

From the career of Sahib Singh it emerges that Sahib Singh had no clear vision, no scruples, no judgement. He was always swayed by his whims. Generally, he lacked determination but when tempted and goaded by his freakishness, he would cross the limits of decency. Seen from this angle, his contemporary writers assessed that he suffered from the habitual derangement of intellect. Despite so many shortcomings, the state's integrity remained intact, the Delhi government and the Sikh chiefs remained tolerant towards it and the Afghan invader Shah Zaman looked upon the state with consideration.

### *Later Rajas*

Karam Singh (1813—1845), Narinder Singh (1845—1876), Rajinder Singh (1876—1900), Bhupinder Singh (1900—1938) and Yadwinder Singh succeeded one after the other. On 1st August, 1947 the state merged with the Indian Union.

### *Phulkian Misl's Real Status*

Whether the Phulkian states should be treated as one of the Misls—is a question which requires investigation. In our opinion Phulkian states did not partake of the nature of a Misl.

There are very cogent reasons. When the Sikhs divided themselves into Buddha Dal and Taruna Dal in 1734, no Phulkian man was represented; nor was there any Phulkian group in the Dal Khalsa in 1748. None of the Phulkian rulers ever attended any meeting of Sarbat Khalsa and like Sardars of Misls, they never distributed the booty and the territory among their followers. On the other hand they followed the practice of the Mughals of

appropriating the entire booty and territory to themselves and rewarding their men with payment in cash, kind and Jagirs. The internal organisation of a Misl was quite different from that of Phulkian states. The Misls were relentless in their struggle against the Mughals and Durrani. Phulkian chiefs' part in the struggle was only marginal. They generally believed in keeping the Durrani and the Mughals in good humour. Their highest goal was to get titles both from the Mughal Emperors and the Durrani kings. No Misl forgot to inscribe the name of their Gurus on the coins while Phulkian states issued their coins in the names of rulers of Delhi, Qandhar and Kabul. In the whole of eighteenth century, no Phulkian ruler ever visited Anandpur or Amritsar, while there are copious references of their visits to Mughal Emperors and Ahmad Shah Durrani.

### **Jind State**

Among the descendants of Phul, the founder of the Jind family was Sukhchain Singh. He began his career as a petty Zamindar and soon acquired a fairly large tract of land. He divided the same into four portions. He kept Jind for himself, gave Balanwali to his eldest son Alam Singh, Badrukhan to his second son Gajpat Singh and Dipalpur to Balaki Singh.

Sukhchain Singh being a big landlord paid land revenue directly into the government treasury at Delhi. In 1743, he fell into arrears. In spite of repeated reminders, he failed to make payment of royal dues as a consequence of which a Mughal contingent reached Jind to realise the amount. Sukhchain Singh slipped away and the Mughal military officers were instigated by Chaudhari Gurdit Singh of Nabha to take strong action against him. Accordingly, Sukhchain Singh's wife Agan with her five year old son Gajpat Singh was taken to Delhi and imprisoned. Agan's maidservant, a Muslim Mirasan disguised herself in the clothes of her mistress and escaped to Jind with her son. Sukhchain Singh died in 1758.

### *Gajpat Singh*

He was succeeded by the second son Gajpat Singh who was twenty at the time of succession. He lived with his father at Phul till the latter's death, assisting him against his rival brother, Gurdit Singh. Badrukhan was already with him. In 1755, he captured the Imperial pargana of Safidon. He took part in the conquest of Dal



Khalsa in January, 1764. He seized a large territory including the towns of Karnal, Panipat, Kharkaudah and Sakrodah. These places formed a part of the crown lands, the revenue of which met the expenses of the royal household. To avoid the ire of Najib-ud-Daula who at that time was acting as the deputy of Shah Alam, the Mughal Emperor, he waited upon him to assure him regular payment of revenues of the aforesaid parganas. He called himself Malguzar—revenue payer.

In 1767, for being remiss in paying the amount of revenue for the last three years, he was imprisoned by Najib-ud-Daula Rohilla at Delhi where he lived for three years. He impressed Muhammad Shah, the Mughal Emperor, as a person of address and good demeanour.<sup>1</sup> According to Dr. Bhagat Singh, "The Emperor wanted of Gajpat Singh to learn Persian language and wear the dress of a Mughal courtier which wrongly led some orthodox Sikhs attribute to his conversion to Islam."<sup>2</sup> He secured his release in 1771 by a promise to collect the revenue and make payment shortly. He left behind his son Mehar Singh as a hostage. He paid 3 lakhs of rupees and secured the release of his son. He also managed a royal *firman* to the effect that he was entitled to assume the title of Raja and issue his own coins. This happened on 31st January, 1772. In this way, he became a ruler from a Zamindar. His coins were exactly similar to Patiala coins. They were called Jindia rupees.

Gajpat Singh married the daughter of Kishan Singh Mansahia who bore him four children, Mehar Singh, Bhag Singh, Bhup Singh and a daughter, Raj Kaur. Mehar Singh died in 1780 to be followed by the death of his alcoholic son, Hari Singh, in 1791. Gajpat Singh also married the widow of his brother, Alam Singh and got possession of his estate Balanwali.

In 1774, he married his daughter Raj Kaur to Mahan Singh Sukarchakia who became the mother of Ranjit Singh. A serious incident took place at the time of marriage. Mahan Singh's very large marriage party's horses and camels trespassed the border of Nabha state and entered the 'Bir' for grazing. Yakub Khan, a trusted officer of the Raja of Nabha, attacked the Jind party looking for the animals. Gajpat Singh felt anguished but he kept silent till the

1. Gian Singh, op. cit., p. 664.

2. Khushwaqt Rai wrongly believes that Gajpat Singh was turned a Muhammedan by the Emperor of Delhi and was later brought into the fold of Sikhism by Jassa Singh Ahluwalia.

marriage party returned. He, then resorted to an artifice to retaliate. He feigned illness and made out that he was on the death-bed. He expressed his keenness to see his cousin Raja Hamir Singh of Nabha. Hamir Singh came accompanied by Yakub Khan. Gajpat Singh seized both of them. Yakub Khan was tortured to death and Hamir Singh was imprisoned. Gajpat Singh himself led the army and seized Nabha territories such as Amloh, Bhadson and Sangrur. On the intercession of Raja Amar Singh of Patiala, Hamir Singh was set free. Amloh and Bhadson were returned to him. Raja Gajpat Singh, however, did not give back Sangrur whom he made his capital of Jind state.

From 1772 onwards, many attempts were made by the Mughal officers, the hostile Sikh Sardars and Maratha generals to take possession of Jind but all were foiled by Gajpat Singh. In July 1774, Samru attacked Jind. All the Sikhs in the neighbourhood of Jind united to give battle to the invader. In the battle, the European trained battalion of Samru were routed with three hundred of them slain.

In May 1776, Abdul Ahad Khan who intended to try another man as his deputy for Panipat and Karnal districts, sent Mullah Rahim Dad Khan to wrest Jind from Gajpat Singh. Mullah did attack but only to meet his death by three balls of a cannon. In his resistance Gajpat Singh through his skilful manoeuvres had got assistance from the rulers of Patiala, Nabha and Kaithal.

In 1779, Abdul Ahad Khan accompanied by Prince Farkhandah Bakht led an expedition against the Cis-Sutlej Sikhs. He encamped at Karnal during the rainy season. Gajpat Singh came in person to pay homage to the prince. Abdul Ahad Khan at the instigation of Baghel Singh imprisoned him. Gajpat Singh secured his liberty by promising to pay 100 lakhs of rupees. Thereafter he became a confidant of Abdul Ahad Khan and played a mediatory role between Raja Amar Singh of Patiala and Abdul Ahad Khan with such shrewdness that Amar Singh did not have to come to wait upon the prince personally, nor did he have to pay any tribute. On the other hand, the Mughal general had to return.

Another Imperial general, Mirza Shafi Khan, accompanied by Zabita Khan Rohilla crossed Jamuna and encamped at Kunjpura. Gajpat Singh waited upon him but Mirza imprisoned him. Thereupon Gajpat Singh promised to pay him one lakh of rupees at the time of his reaching Kunjpura and fifty thousand rupees at Karnal. He also gave commitment that for the remaining two lakhs

of rupees, he was prepared to hand over his son as security, apart from his remaining in attendance upon him. Shafi intended to free Gajpat Singh, but Najaf Khan the Prime Minister at Delhi required Shafi to send him to the court at Delhi for the prestige of the Mughal Emperor. This was done, Najaf Khan fixed Gajpat Singh's tribute at six lakhs, out of which he realised three lakhs immediately. He kept his son as a hostage for the payment of the balance.

Gajpat Singh had deep affection for Raja Amar Singh of Patiala. All through his career his responses to Patiala callings exuded amity and warmth. He helped Raja Amar Singh in subduing the revolt of Prince Himmat Singh in 1765. He also rendered help to Patiala when Bhatinda fort was attacked. Amar Singh also reciprocated when Gajpat Singh was locked in a feud with the Nabha Chief in 1774. When Raja Amar Singh attacked Sialba, Gajpat Singh actively helped him. Gajpat Singh continued to watch the interests of Patiala state even after the death of Raja Amar Singh. When Patiala state was shaken by the contumacious Sardars and self-seeking courtiers Gajpat Singh went to Sahib Singh with a contingent to assist his Prime Minister to restore order.

Gajpat Singh raised two forts, one at Sangrur and one at Jind and renovated one at Safidon. He was renowned for his amiability and infallible generalship. In all he took part in thirty battles which amply bear testimony to his military craftsmanship.

He died on November 11, 1789 at the age of fifty-one, leaving behind him a territory yielding revenue between 7 to 16 lakhs. His army consisted of 1500 horse and 500 foot.<sup>1</sup>

### *Bhag Singh*

Gajpat Singh was succeeded by his son Bhag Singh (b. 1768—d. 1819) who was wise, shrewd and an adept in diplomacy. Out of the patrimony, he got territories of Jind, Safidon and Sangrur while the rest of it consisting of Badrukhan went to his brother, Bhup Singh. In 1786, the districts of Gohana and Kharkhauda were conferred upon him in Jagir by Shah Alam. In 1794, Bhag Singh joined the Patiala army under Rani Sahib Kaur in the attack on the Maratha generals, Anta Rao and Lachhman Rao. In 1795, Bhag Singh lost Karnal which was occupied by the Marathas and made over to George Thomas. In 1881, he took part

---

1. James Brown, *History of Origin and Progress of the Sikhs*.

in the battle which was jointly fought by Maratha general, and General Parron in concert with Sikh Sardars to drive out General Thomas from Hansi.

Bhag Singh was the first of all the cis-Sutlej chiefs to seek an alliance with the British government. He joined General Lake in his pursuit of Jaswant Rao Holkar and later as an envoy of the British, he told Ranjit Singh not to espouse the hopeless cause of Holkar. The British rewarded him with a life grant of the pargana of Bhawani in the name of his son, Kanwar Partap Singh.

During the cis-Sutlej campaign, Maharaja Ranjit Singh gave Ludhiana consisting of 24 villages worth Rs. 15380 a year, 24 villages of Jandiala, two villages of Kot, two of Jagraon. During the expedition of 1807, Bhag Singh received three villages of Ghungrana and 27 villages of Morinda in Sirhind. Notwithstanding all this, Bhag Singh feared Ranjit Singh for his ambition of becoming the sole ruler of the whole Sikh population. He, therefore, was inclined to put more confidence in the friendship of the English than that of the Maharaja Ranjit Singh despite the fact that he was his maternal uncle considered to be a very close relation in the social set-up. Against this backdrop, he included himself in the deputation that met Mr. Seton on March 22, 1808 in Delhi and solicited the English help for the protection of Sikh Sardars in cis-Sutlej region. He also joined General Ochterlony in conducting negotiations with the Sikh chiefs. In 1809, the Jind state came under the protection of the British.

Bhag Singh died on 16th June, 1819, after five years of protracted illness.

#### *Fateh Singh (1789—1822)*

Fateh Singh, the eldest son of Bhag Singh, succeeded him. His uneventful rule came to an end with his death on 3rd February, 1822 at his residence at Sangrur.

#### *Sangat Singh*

The next ruler was Sangat Singh, a boy of eleven years. His installation ceremony took place on 30th July, 1822 at Jind. In 1826 and 1827 he visited Lahore Darbar. Maharaja Ranjit Singh received him with utmost courtsey and awarded many land grants to him as a token of his respect for him. The British government took serious note of this and reminded him of his obligation to seek prior permission to enter into relationship with any foreign power.

Sangat Singh paid no heed to the British remonstrance and very boldly negotiated with him. According to Lepel Griffin, he even paid a personal visit to Lahore.

He died on November 4-5, 1833 at the age of barely twenty-three years. He had three wives but left no son to succeed him.

### *Sarup Singh*

The next relations who could advance valid claims to the Gaddi were three second cousins, Sarup Singh, Sukha Singh and Bhagwan Singh. But these candidates had for long, been cut off from the straight line of succession to the Jind Branch of the family. Many people including the widows of Sangat Singh and of his father aspired for the rulership.

It took nearly two years and a half to finally decide that Sarup Singh of Bazidpur was the most legitimate claimant. He, therefore, was formally installed in the presence of all the Phulkian chiefs and the British agent in April 1837. In the Anglo-Sikh wars of 1845-46, the Raja was called upon by the British to supply 150 camels for the use in the Sirhind Division. He neglected to comply with the demand inspite of his repeated promises and assurances. But in the mutiny of 1857, he rendered valuable services to the British Government. He was present at the siege of Delhi and his troops under commandant Kahan Singh Mann fought side by side with the English when that town was assaulted, and the city wall was scaled. He was to the credit of the Jind forces that they were first to enter the Red Fort.

The Raja's services to the British government were specially applauded. He was given Dadri, thirteen villages near Sangrur. He was allowed to raise the building of the Gurdwara Sis-Ganj which had been demolished by the Muslim fanatics after the annexation of the Punjab who, on this spot had raised a mosque.

### *Raghubir Singh (1832—1887)*

Sarup Singh was succeeded by his son Raghubir Singh. He was a worthy son of his worthy father—strong, wise and a good administrator. He had a religious disposition, committed to his religion, Sikhism and considerate of all other religions. He raised Gurdwara Nanakiana Sahib, 3 km from Sangrur in memory of the visits of Guru Nanak Dev and Sri Guru Hargobind Sahib and attached a large tract to it for its maintenance and upkeep. He also built temples in deference to the sentiments of the Hindus. He

built denovo the city of Sangrur on the model of the city of Jaipur. He also laid out 'Banasar Garden' with a spacious tank and a Bara Dari in its midst.

In his reign, Dadri people rose in revolt but the same was crushed without any help from outside. He treated the vanquished with restraint. He punished only the ring leaders, permitting the Zamindars to return to Dadri territory and rebuild their ruined villages.

Raghubir Singh died on March 7, 1887. He was followed by Raja Ranbir Singh, his grandson and son of late Balbir Singh. He was intelligent and developed pattern of governance that very largely resembled the one that obtained in the British territory. He died on April 1, 1948. He was succeeded by his son, Rajbir Singh. In July, Jind state lapsed into Patiala and East Punjab States Union, which sometime after became part of the present Punjab.

## **Nabha State**

### *Gurdit Singh*

The Nabha and Jind families descended from the same successor, Tiloka, the eldest son of Phul. Tiloka had two sons, Gurdit Singh and Sukhchain Singh. From the elder, Gurdit Singh, descended the Nabha family and from the younger, Sukhchain Singh, descended the Jind family. In 1729 Tiloka died and Gurdit Singh succeeded to his patrimony. He founded village of Dhanaula in 1729 and later the town of Sangrur which remained the headquarters of Nabha State till it was seized by Raja Gajpat Singh of Jind in 1774. He in collaboration with Ala Singh acquired a fairly large territory and possessed a strong force.

### *Hamir Singh*

His grandson, Hamir Singh, became the head of the family in 1754 after the death of Gurdit Singh. He considerably extended his territory. He included Pakho and Badyala in his territory. He laid the foundation of the city of Nabha in 1755 following the example of Ala Singh who founded Patiala in 1752. Pargana Bhadson was acquired by him in 1759. In the wake of the fall of Sirhind in 1764, he seized the parganas of Amlah, Bhadson and Wirro. In 1774, Sangrur was forcibly taken by Gajpat Singh. He also captured Rori from Rahimdad Khan, governor of Hissar in 1796. He married his daughter to Gurbakhsh Singh, son of Jai Singh



Kanhiya. He struck his own coins which marked his sovereignty and independence. The silver coin was called the Nabha rupee. Gold coins were also struck occasionally. Hamir Singh died in 1783. The Nabha rulers unlike those of Patiala and Jind, issued coins in the names of Sikh Gurus.

Hamir Singh was succeeded by his eight year old son Jaswant Singh. Rani Deso, in preference to his real mother, became regent of the kingdom. She married her daughter, Subha Kaur to Sahib Singh Bhangi of Gujrat, son of Gujjar Singh of Lahore. The lady acquitted herself creditably. She died in 1793 and her enemy Gajpat Singh of Jind had passed away four years earlier.

### *Jaswant Singh*

Jaswant Singh who assumed the charge of the state in his own hands entered into an alliance with the British government when Holkar was advancing northward to Lahore. Perceiving that the friendship with Maharaja Ranjit Singh was dangerous, he put himself under British protection, along with the other chiefs of cis-Sutlej region, in 1809.

Jaswant Singh continued to administer his state till 1840 in which year he died. He was succeeded by his son, Devinder Singh. The latter was succeeded by his minor son Bharpur Singh in A.D. 1855.

He attained the age of discretion a few months only after the mutiny broke out in 1857. The youthful Raja rendered various types of services to the British in mutiny. His detachment formed an escort for the British to keep safe the road from Phillaur to Delhi. He advanced a loan of two and a half lakhs of rupees to the Indian government. His forces maintained order at Ludhiana. The British Government rewarded him liberally for these services. He was also given a territory in the Ludhiana district and a part of Jhajjar territory.

## Chapter 15

# SIKH PRINCIPALITIES IN THE LATER HALF OF EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

From A.D. 1748 onwards, the Sikhs embarked upon the course of territorial occupation, and gradually they succeeded in occupying a considerable segment of the Punjab. Alongwith the Sardars of different Misls, there were others who carved out their principalities independent of or in association with them. Towards the end of the eighteenth century there were large number of Sikh principalities in cis-Sutlej and Trans-Sutlej regions of the Punjab. According to Veena Sachdeva, the celebrated author of *Polity and Economy of the Punjab*—During the eighteenth century the number of Sikh principalities stood fifty-three while according to Dr. J.S. Grewal, these numbered over three scores. In our reckoning, they numbered fifty-four. In cis-Sutlej region, the number of Sikh principalities did not exceed thirty-four.

The Sikh principalities in either region had certain distinguished features. One, all the Sikh chiefs came from the countryside. Eighty-four out of eighty-eight Sikh chiefs were Jats. Out of the remaining four, one was Carpenter, one was Kalal and two were Khattris. Two, the overwhelming majority of the Sikh chiefs sprang from ordinary families of cultivators. Their political background was different from that of the Muslim chiefs. Whereas Muslim chiefs could take advantage largely of existing Mughal administrative framework, the Sikh chiefs set aside the Mughal administrative structure and they had to wage a protracted struggle for establishing their principalities. Three, the financial resources of the Sikh chiefs ranged from 50 thousand rupees a year to over ten lakhs. Only five Sikh chiefs commanded resources exceeding ten lakh rupees per annum : Hari Singh Bhangi, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Charat Singh Sukarchakia, Gujjar Singh Bhangi, Ala Singh of Patiala. Even the Sikh chiefs possessing annual income ranging from five to ten lakhs were small in number. In view of

this, it can be safely surmised that many of the Sikh chiefs were not powerful. Four, in spite of vast differences in annual income of different Sardars, no financially strong Sardar subverted any financially weak Sardar. All the Sardars respected the sovereignty of one another. There are instance of Sardars harbouring enmity/rivalry for others but that was due to the clash of ambition for acquiring new territories.

In the last decade of the eighteenth century, there was no inclination or incentive among the Sikh chiefs to combine their resources for further aggrandisement. For defence, however, they were left no choice when Zaman Shah invaded Punjab. In the process of forming a combined force against him, Ranjit Singh emerged as an important leader. With the consistent support of Fateh Singh Ahluwalia and Sada Kaur, he was able to subjugate the small chiefs.

### ***Sikh Principalities in Trans-Sutlej Punjab***

#### **(1) Principality of Haqiqat Singh**

He was the most prominent of Jai Singh's associates and belonged to the village Kahna Kacha which was the birth-place of Jai Singh as well. With his headquarter at Fatehgarh Churian, he ruled over a number of villages largely in a circle formed by Fatehgarh Churian, Batala, Kalanaur and Dera Baba Nanak. Another chunk of territory occupied by Haqiqat Singh was around Narot Jaimal Singh on the left of the river Beas below Kathua and Lakhanpur. He had also occupied a number of villages near Sambrial in the Sialkot region.<sup>1</sup>

Haqiqat Singh remained aligned with Jai Singh Kanhiya in most of his campaigns. In 1776, when the Ramgarhia chief was ousted from the Bari Doab, Kalanaur and the surrounding villages fell to the share of Haqiqat Singh, his possessions were retained by his son and successor Jaimal Singh, even after Ramgarhia returned to Bari Doab in 1785.<sup>2</sup> Jaimal Singh married his daughter Chand Kaur to Prince Kharak Singh in 1812. After his death his territories were taken over by Ranjit Singh.<sup>3</sup>

---

1. *Settlement Report Sialkot*, 1865, p. 47.

2. Lepel Griffin, *The Punjab Chiefs*, pp. 316-17.

3. *Ibid*, p. 322.

**(2) Gulab Singh Khaira—Dina Nagar**

The area around Dina Nagar was under the occupation of Gulab Singh Khaira. He subjugated it in 1760 as an associate of Jai Singh Kanhiya. Much is not known about the activities of this Sardar in the eighteenth century. In 1803, he was obliged to pay tribute to Ranjit Singh. In 1809 his territories were taken over and he was given a Small Jagir.

**(3) Nand Singh—Pathankot**

Pathankot with its surrounding area was occupied by Nand Singh in 1760. After Nand Singh's death in 1774, Tara Singh, a nephew of Haqiqat Singh of Fatehgarh Churian and son-in-law of Nand Singh took possession of the territory.<sup>1</sup> In 1781, he conquered some area in Shahpur Kandi jointly with the chief of Sujanpur and added twenty-six villages to his possession. Ranjit Singh took over his territory in 1807.

**(4) Amar Singh Man—Sujanpur**

Amar Singh, a Man Jat of Dharamkot Bagga was in possession of Sujanpur towards the end of the eighteenth century. According to District Gazetteer Gurdaspur (1883-84), Amar Singh and Nand Singh had taken over the Territory of Ajaib Singh, a Qanungo of the Mughals. They divided it between themselves, Nand Singh got Pathankot as his share while Amar Singh took possession of Sujanpur. In 1781, he added eighteen villages in the Palahi area of Shahpur to his possession. On his death in 1805, his elder son Bhag Singh succeeded him. He accepted the suzerainty of Ranjit Singh. Bhag Singh died in 1808 and his brother Budh Singh succeeded him. When in 1809, he refused to enhance the amount of his tribute, his territory was taken over by Ranjit Singh and he was given a service Jagir.<sup>2</sup>

**(5) Jodh Singh—Saurian**

Jodh Singh (not associated with Jai Singh Kanhiya) occupied Saurian and a small territory around it. Jodh Singh was married to Gujjar Singh's daughter. It is believed that he supported Ranjit Singh in his occupation of Lahore. His son Amir Singh started

1. *District Gazetteer Gurdaspur*.

Ram Sukh Rao, *Sri Fateh Singh Partap Prabbakar*, pp. 129-30.

2. *Ibid.*

serving Ranjit Singh. He died in 1825. Thereafter Saurian was taken over by Ranjit Singh. This was a very small principality.

#### **(6) Hira Singh—Chunian**

This principality was founded by Hira Singh Sandhu Jat. His father Hemraj was the Chaudhari of Bharwal in the parganah of Chunian. Hira Singh seemed to have occupied Chunian, Khudian and Satgarha in around 1763. He died in 1766 fighting against the chief of Pak Pattan. His successor Nahar Singh was his nephew who died two years later in a skirmish with the Kharals. Nahar Singh's son and successor Ranjit Singh extended his legacy mainly at the cost of Kharals. He occupied Faridabad Pucheke and Jethpur across the river Ravi. They also conquered territory upto Sharaqpur in the north, Sayyadwala and Kamalia from the neighbouring Sikh chief of Gogera.<sup>1</sup> He died in 1781 to be succeeded by his son Bhagwan Singh. He lost Sayyadwala to its former chief. He occupied the whole territory of Malka Haks. He died in 1789 to be succeeded by his brother Gian Singh who lost Kamalia to the Kharals in 1790s. Kahan Singh succeeded Gian Singh at latter's death in 1807. Three years after, Maharaja Ranjit Singh occupied his territory.

#### **(7) Lal Singh—Kanganpur**

Lal Singh occupied a number of villages around Kanganpur and Maruf in the north of Dipalpur and south of Chunian. This made Kanganpur as his headquarter. His territories were taken over by Ranjit Singh in 1807.

#### **(8) Tara Singh—Phillaur**

Tara Singh was the chief of Phillaur. He was a Kang Jat like his namesake Tara Singh Dallewalia. His territories lay on both sides of the river Sutlej with the larger chunk in Jullundur Doab. He died around 1790 to be succeeded by his brother Koer Singh. Tara Singh's son Sadda Singh succeeded his uncle around 1795. In the time of his son Megh Singh, Ranjit Singh occupied Phillaur in 1809.

---

1. Giani Gian Singh, *Raj Khalsa*, 564;  
*District Gazetteer Montgomery*, 1883-84.

**(9) Tara Singh—Rahon**

Tara Singh made Rahon as the headquarter of his principality. He was an active participant in the campaigns of Dal Khalsa. His earlier conquests were in Sarai Dakhni and Nawan Shahar to which he added Rahon and Nakodar. He died in 1807 when he was accompanying Ranjit Singh in his campaign across the Sutlej. His sons Jhanda Singh and Dasaunda Singh were allowed to retain Sarai Dakhni in Jagir, while the rest of the territories were annexed by Ranjit Singh to his kingdom.

**(10) Jhanda Singh—Kathgarh**

The chief of Kathgarh was Jhanda Singh, a resident of Sultanwind near Amritsar. He acquired territory in Jullundur Doab worth about a lakh of rupees a year. He died in 1797. His son Tara Singh had to acknowledge the supremacy of Ranjit Singh soon after his father's death. He retained a few villages only as a Jagirdar.

**(11) Dharam Singh—Banga**

Dharam Singh, a Khatri, conquered the town of Banga with 240 villages around. In 1804, he was constrained to become a tributary to Ranjit Singh.

**(12) Khushal Singh—Jullundur**

The principality of Jullundhar was the most important principality of the Doab. It was founded by Khushal Singh, son of Kapur Singh Singhpuria, who occupied Jullundur and some villages around it, in 1758 just after the death of Kapur Singh. Before he died, he was in possession of Patti and Bari Doab, a few dozen villages across the river Sutlej including a part of Banur and the territory around Jullundur encircled by Nakodar, Kapurthala, Phagwara and Sham Chaurasi.<sup>1</sup> Khushal Singh was succeeded by his son Budh Singh. In 1805, he was obliged to become a tributary of Ranjit Singh. In 1811, he was constrained to cross the river Sutlej to reside at Banur.<sup>2</sup> He died in 1816 at Banur.

1. *Settlement Report Amritsar* (1860).

Lepel Griffin, *The Rajas of the Punjab*, 61n.

2. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Twarikh* (Pbi.), II, 70, pp. 133-35.

Princep, *Origin of the Sikh Power*, pp. 62-68.



### **(13) Baghel Singh's Principality from Haryana to Garhshankar**

The territory along the Shivalik from Haryana to Garhshankar came into possession of Baghel Singh Karor Singhia. Baghel Singh did not reside in Jullundur Doab probably because he attached more importance to his territorial and political interests in cis-Sutlej region and Indo-Gangetic Doab. Before his death in 1805, his elder wife Rup Kaur had started administering the Haryana territory which she continued to do till her own death in 1809. All her possessions were taken over by Ranjit Singh.<sup>1</sup>

### **(14) Gurbakhsh Singh—Wazirabad**

Gurbakhsh Singh occupied Wazirabad with about 50 villages as an associate of Charat Singh. He died in 1776 and was succeeded by his son Jodh Singh who extended his territories in the direction of Daska occupying Ghirthal, Gojra and Mitranwali. He had good relations with Mahan Singh.

### **(15) Dal Singh Gill of Akalgarh**

He in association with Charat Singh occupied Ahmedabad in 1767. When Mahan Singh defeated the Chathas in 1783, Dal Singh was given Alipur (Akalgarh).<sup>2</sup> Like Jodh Singh of Wazirabad, Dal Singh helped Sahib Singh when he was besieged by Mahan Singh. In 1797, he, however, helped Ranjit Singh in his campaign against Jan Muhammad Chatha, who was all bent to revive the principality of the Chathas.<sup>3</sup> His territory was taken over by Ranjit Singh after Dal Singh's death in 1804. His widow was given two villages for subsistence.<sup>4</sup>

### **(16) Lal Singh—Muraliwala**

To the south of Gujranwala, there were two principalities of two chiefs; Lal Singh with his headquarter at Muraliwala and Sahib Singh with his headquarter at Sheikhpura. Lal Singh was in occupation of the territory between Muraliwala and Sheikhpura. His son Bhag Singh who succeeded to him added quite a number

1. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Twarikh*, II, p. 116.

2. Ibid; *District Gazetteer Gujranwala* (1895), p. 26.

3. Sohan Lal, op. cit. (Pbi. Tra. II, p. 38);  
Ibid, pp. 57-58.

4. Ibid, p. 38.

of villages to his patrimony. According to Dr. Veena Sachdeva, his territory comprised 150 villages.<sup>1</sup> Maharaja Ranjit Singh took over his territories in 1805 and he was made a service Jagirdar.

### **(17) Sahib Singh—Sheikhupura**

Sahib Singh occupied Sheikhupura after ousting Inder Singh Virk probably in 1780. His son Amir Singh was ousted by Ranjit Singh from Sheikhupura in 1808 who was given a Jagir worth Rs. 4,00,000/- a year for service.

### **(18) Jiwan Singh Ghuman, Mohar Singh, Natha Singh and Sahib Singh—Sialkot**

The area of Sialkot was conquered by Jhanda Singh Bhangi in association with some Sikh Sardars in 1770 but he retained only a portion of the conquest along the river Chenab on the west of Sialkot. The city of Sialkot with the villages around was occupied by four chiefs—Jiwan Singh Ghuman, Mohar Singh Atariwala, Natha Singh Shaheed and Sahib Singh. Sialkot was taken over by Ranjit Singh in 1807. Each of the four Sardars exercised his right of sovereignty over one-fourth of Sialkot.

### **(19) Bhag Singh Hallowala—Parganahs of Zafarwal and Aurangabad**

He held his possessions in the parganahs of Aurangabad and Zafarwal, his headquarter being at Zafarwal. The forts of Qila Sobha Singh, Qila Suba Singh were built by his sons. In 1800, he joined the allies against Ranjit Singh. Four years later he was constrained to pay tribute to Ranjit Singh and accept his overlordship.

### **(20) Gurbakhsh Singh—Doda**

He had his possessions in Sakargarh area with his headquarter at Doda. After his death in 1795, he was succeeded by his son Sudh Singh who retained his possession till his death in 1813, as a tributary of Ranjit Singh.

### **(21) Nar Singh—Chamariwala**

He had his territories on both sides of the river Ravi with Pasrur as his headquarter. In 1800 he supported Sahib Singh of

1. Veena Sachdeva, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-70

Gujrat against Ranjit Singh. In 1804, he was made tributary by the Lahore Darbar.

### **(22) Karam Singh Gill—south of the city of Sialkot**

He held his territory south of the city of Sialkot. He hailed from the village Chhinna in the Bari Doab. He was a minor chief. Around 1806, Ranjit Singh made him a Jagir over 70 horsemen with a Jagir worth Rs. 50,000.

### **(23) Jassa Singh—Daska**

He occupied Daska in the Rachna Doab during the invasions of Ahmad Shah Abdali.<sup>1</sup> His son and successor Nidhan Singh submitted to Zaman Shah in 1797. In 1807, he was made a tributary by Ranjit Singh. Three years later, his territory was taken over, and a handsome Jagir was given to him for maintaining 100 horsemen.<sup>2</sup>

### **(24) Gujjar Singh—Gujrat**

He was the only Sikh chief in the Upper Chaj Doab. He defeated the Gakhar Chief of Gujrat in 1765 in the battle outside the city wall, occupied his territory and adopted Gujrat as his headquarters. He held Jalalpur, Daulat Nagar, Dingra Bahlolpur, Karianwala and Manahar in the Upper Chaj Doab. The territory between Chenab and the Jhelum upto the territories of Akhnur and Bhimber also came under his control. The chiefs of Akhnur, Bhimber, and Kheriali accepted his suzerainty. He also possessed some territory in Rachna Doab, besides the well known town of Sodhra.<sup>3</sup>

Towards the close of his life, Gujjar Singh started residing at Lahore, leaving Gujrat in the hands of his eldest son, Sahib Singh. Fateh Singh, the youngest of his sons lived with him. Sukha Singh his another son was made the incharge of his territories in the Rachna Doab and Chaj Doab. Soon after Sahib Singh wrested the territory which was assigned to Sukha Singh whom he killed in the field of battle. Gujjar Singh was much hurt and grieved but

1. Lapel Griffin, *The Punjab Chiefs*, pp. 348-49.

2. Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Twarikh* (Pbi. Trans.) II, p. 390;  
*Settlement Report Sialkot* (1865), p. 48.

3. Ganesh Das Wadehra, *Char Bagh-i-Punjab* (Pbi. Trans.) p. 133;  
*Settlement Report of Sialkot* (1865), p. 133.

his paternal instinct constrained him from going beyond reprimanding Sahib Singh. He, however, handed over the territory in Rachna Doab to Fateh Singh who was ousted by Sahib Singh after his father's death. Thus the entire territory of Gujjar Singh passed under the control of Sahib Singh.<sup>1</sup>

In the last decade of the eighteenth century, Sahib Singh was one of the most powerful chiefs, particularly after the death of Mahan Singh Sukarchakia. By 1807, Sahib Singh had to acknowledge the supremacy of Ranjit Singh and in token thereof agreed to pay annual tribute. In 1810, his territories were taken over by the Lahore Darbar and Sahib Singh's son Gulab Singh was given Jagir worth only 4000 rupees in Gujranwala area. Sahib Singh also got a Jagir in Sialkot area for subsistence. Sahib Singh died in 1814.<sup>2</sup>

### (25) Milkha Singh—Rawalpindi

In 1767, Gujjar Singh, Charat Singh Sukarchakia and Milkha Singh Thepuria led a joint campaign in Sind Sagar Doab. The territories of Gakhars fell to the share of Milkha Singh Thepuria who adopted Rawalpindi, then a small village, as his headquarter. Milkha Singh defended his possession with courage from the onslaught of his neighbouring Gakhar chiefs. He continued to keep firm hold over his territories when Zaman Shah led expeditions into the Punjab in 1790. Before his death in 1804, however, he acknowledged the supremacy of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. In the period of his grandson, Anand Singh, the territories of Rawalpindi were occupied by Ranjit Singh. Anand Singh was given a Jagir worth 42000 rupees a year.

### (26) Qamar Singh—Gogera

This Sardar founded the principality of Gogera. Before his demise, he had conquered Kabirwala and Kamalia in the Rachna Doab. However, he lost Sayyadwala to the chief of Bharwal and it was during his attempt to recover it that he died in 1780. He was succeeded by his brother Wazir Singh who lost Kamalia to the Kharals but recovered Sayyadwala from the Bharwal chief. He died in 1799 and was succeeded by his son Mehar Singh who lost his territories to Ranjit Singh in 1804 and got a Jagir in Gogera

1. Ganesh Das, op. cit., p. 142-43; Lepel Griffin, *The Punjab Chiefs*, p. 397.

2. Ganesh Das Wadehra, *Char Bagh-i-Punjab* (Pbi. Trans.), p. 134.

worth Rs. 4000 a year.

### **(27) Karam Singh Dula—Chiniot**

Hari Singh Bhangi was the first among the Sikhs to reduce it in 1760. He gave it to Karam Singh, known as Dula because of his gallantry and generosity who had joined Hari Singh in the campaign.

In 1718, Sial chief, Inayat Khan ousted him from Chiniot which he was able to recover only in 1787. In 1790, he supported Sahib Singh of Gujrat against Mahan Singh Sukarchakia. He was succeeded by his son Jassa Singh who sided with Sahib Singh against Ranjit Singh. Chiniot was taken over by Ranjit Singh in 1802. Jassa Singh's territories were occupied by Ranjit Singh and he was given subsistence Jagir worth Rs. 50000 a year.<sup>1</sup>

### **(28) Dhanna Singh Bajwa—Bhera**

Bhera territory was lost to Jhanda Singh Bhangi in 1771 who gave it to his associate, Dhanna Singh Bajwa who belonged to Kalawala in the Rachna Doab and had only a few villages in his possession. He married his son Jodh Singh to the daughter of Sahib Singh of Gujrat which further strengthened his position because Sahib Singh was at that time one of the most powerful Sikh Sardars.

On his death in 1793, he was succeeded by Jodh Singh who aligned with Sahib Singh against Ranjit Singh in 1800. In 1803 he was forced to surrender Bhera to Ranjit Singh for some time. He was able to hold his possessions in Rachna Doab, but in 1806-07 finally, he was compelled to accept a service Jagir while his territories worth about Rs. 60000 in the Sialkot region were annexed to the kingdom of Lahore.

### **(29) Charat Singh Sangatpuria**

He possessed 28 villages in Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts which yielded income amounting to about 40 lakhs. He was succeeded by Sardul Singh, Nar Singh and Didar Singh one after another. The territory of his principality was taken over by Ranjit Singh in 1805.

---

1. *Settlement Report Jhang* (1882); Ali-ud-Din Mufti, *Ibrat Nama* (Pbi. Tr.), p. 388.

**(30) Gulab Singh Khaira—Adina Nagar and Khadur**

He held Adina Nagar and Khadur, the territory capable of yielding income of one lakh per annum was made subordinate in 1803. The principality was annexed by Ranjit Singh soon after.

**(31) Karam Singh—Pahuwind**

He possessed Pahuwind area which yielded annual income amounting to eight thousand rupees. He lost territories in 1805 and was given a service Jagir.

**(32) Karam Singh Chhinna**

He held Firozke, Chhinna, Nigran, Lala, Najra. He was Gill by caste. He lost territories in 1806 to Ranjit Singh and was granted a service Jagir.

**(33) Karam Singh Mananwala**

He possessed Mananwala along with some villages near Amritsar. His successors were Ram Singh (1779-88) and Sham Singh (1788-90). Ranjit Singh took over the whole territory except Mananwala which was converted into a service Jagir for Sham Singh.

**(34) Majha Singh—Khunda**

He held Naushehra, Zafarwal and Khunda. He was Randhawa by caste. He was succeeded by Prem Singh who lost part of his territories to Sada Kaur in 1795. Later on in the first decade of the 19th century, he lost territories to Ranjit Singh and was content with a service Jagir.

**(35) Mehtab Singh—Wadala**

He held Wadala near Daska in Sialkot district. Mahan Singh Sukarchakia imprisoned him while he came to attend a family gathering arranged by the former at Gujranwala. Immediately after, Mahan Singh sent his forces to seize the territory of the Sardar whose sons put up a stout resistance which constrained him to strike a compromise. The youngmen were to pay Rs. 125000 for the release of their father.

After some time Nidhan Singh Hattu seized Wadala. Ranjit Singh expelled him after the battle of Daska in 1809.



**(36) Sahaj Singh—14 villages near Phagwara**

He possessed fourteen villages near Phagwara which yielded income amounting to twenty thousand. He was succeeded by Dayal Singh and was allowed to retain his territory as service Jagir.

**(37) Sahib Singh—Taragarh**

Taragarh and Wachhova formed his territory. He was succeeded by Jodh Singh, Vir Singh, Amir Singh and Kahan Singh one after another. The territories were annexed to the kingdom of Lahore.

**(38) Sahib Singh—Kathunangal**

He held 30 villages near Kathunangal. He was succeeded by Jit Singh and Budh Singh who were allowed to retain them as service Jagirdars.

**(39) Sahib Singh—Sheikhupura**

He held Sheikhupura and its adjoining areas which yielded an annual income of Rs. 1,60,000. He was succeeded by Amir Singh who lost territories in 1808 and was content to receive service Jagir.

**(40) Sanwal Singh's principality—Pasrur**

He held Pasrur, Ajnala, Chamiari, Ghaniwal, Narowal, Lal Shekara, Damtal. His annual income was about 2 lakh. He was succeeded by Nar Singh who lost territories in 1806 and was content to receive subsistence Jagir.

**(41) Sobha Singh—Lahore**

He held one-third of Lahore—Nainakot, Sarai Amanat Khan, Khanpur, Niaz Beg and Begowal. He was succeeded by his son Mehar Singh (1797-99) who lost territories to Ranjit Singh in 1799.

**(42) Tara Singh—Phillaur**

He held Phillaur. He was succeeded by Koer Singh (1790-95) Satta Singh and Megh Singh. The territory was lost to Ranjit Singh in 1809.

**(43) Tara Singh Pathankotia—Pathankot**

He held Pathankot and Shahpur. His territories yielded an annual income amounting to sixty thousand rupees.

**(44) Tehal Singh Chhachi—Makhad**

He was in possession of Makhad. He was succeeded by Fateh Singh and Sher Singh respectively who were allowed to retain their territories as service Jagirs.

**(45) Lehna Singh—one-third of Lahore**

He possessed one-third of Lahore along with Shahdara, Fazlabad, Talwandi, Haveli Lakha and Wattu. He was succeeded by Chait Singh (1797). The principality was annexed to the kingdom of Lahore in 1799.

**(46) Nidhan Singh Hattu—Daska**

He owned many parganahs in Sialkot district with his seat at Daska. When Ranjit Singh visited Ramnagar, he summoned Nidhan Singh Hattu before him. The Sardar agreed to oblige the Maharaja under the security of Sodhi priest. The Maharaja consented, but when he appeared, he was put behind the bars. The Sodhi priest protested and sat in Dharna. Ranjit Singh thereupon released the Sardar who immediately crossed into Jamuna territory and took up service with Ata Mohammad Khan of Kashmir.

Seven more principalities namely those of Ahluwalias, Dallewalias, Nishanwalias, Kanhiyas, Nakais, Ramgarhias, Sukerchakias existed in the Trans-Sutlej region. These have been amply detailed in the chapter entitled 'Sikh Misls'.

### *Sikh Principalities in cis-Sutlej Region<sup>1</sup>*

**(1) Raja Amar Singh of Patiala**

The boundaries of Patiala territory extended upto Lakhi jungle and the country of the Bhattis in the west; Hissar and Jind and Hansi in the south. Its northern boundary extended from the boundary of Malerkotla to the vicinity of Ambala, including some places lying up to the foot of the Shivalik Hills. In the east, Patiala territory was surrounded by Kaithal. Sirhind the most notable town in the territory between the Jamuna and the Sutlej was included in it.

---

1. The position of the cis-Sutlej States went on changing. We simply give their position as it stood in 1769.

## (2) Nodh Singh Nishanwala

Nodh Singh was the son of Inder Sain and his wife Dharmon, a woman of exquisite beauty. The family belonged to Ajnala in the Amritsar district. Nodh Singh was present at the battle of Sirhind in which he was wounded by a bullet. As he could not move further, he seized Kheri, the richest parganah of the Ludhiana district yielding income of Rs. 25,000 a year.<sup>1</sup>

## (3) Dharam Singh Dallewalia

A cousin of celebrated Tara Singh Ghaiba, he captured a group of villages and founded Dharam Singh Wala in the centre where he eventually settled down.<sup>2</sup>

## (4) Sudh Singh Bajwa

Machhiwara and the eastern portions of the Utalan Parganah came under Sudh Singh Bajwa.<sup>3</sup>

## (5) Rai Singh

He captured sixteen villages to the south-west of Khanna in Samrala Tehsil of Ludhiana district.

## (6) Rai Singh Karor Singhia

A group of villages in Samrala Tehsil formed the territory of Rai Singh Karor Singhia. He was the father of Rattan Singh Bhangu<sup>4</sup>, the celebrated author of *Pantb Parkash* and the son of Mehtab Singh Mirankotia. He was an important member of the Karor Singhia Misl.

## (7) Surjan Singh Dallewalia

He seized parganahs of Dharamkot, Mari and Tihrana to the south of the Sutlej. He was a Badech Jat of the village Dhianpur in Amritsar district.

## (8) Kaur Singh Dallewalia

A number of villages around Kang were under the occupation of

---

1. *Gosba-i-Punjab*, pp. 24-29.

2. *Chiefs and Families of Note*, pp. 280-82.

3. *Ludhiana Settlement Report*, 1878, p. 27.

4. *Chiefs and Families of Note*, pp. 62-63.

Kaur Singh Dallewalia who was the cousin of Tara Singh Ghaiba.<sup>1</sup>

### **(9) Jassa Singh Ahluwalia**

Territories of Jagraon, Bharog, Fatehgarh and Naraingarh were occupied by Jassa Singh Ahluwalia who immediately after left Hakumat Singh as his Thanedar in Bharog (103 villages), Mirza Singh in Fatehgarh and Dasaunda Singh in Naraingarh.<sup>2</sup>

### **(10) Tara Singh Kakar Dallewalia**

Another member of Dallewalia Misl who occupied Phillaur, Nurpur, Sialba, Kothala and a few other villages along the southern bank of the Sutlej.<sup>3</sup>

### **(11) Dasaunda Singh Nishanwalia**

He took possession of the territories of Singhanwala, Sahnewal, Sarai Lashkari Khan, Dorah, Sonti, Amlah, Zira, Liddhar and Ambala and made the last named place as his headquarters. On his death, he was succeeded by his younger brother Sangat Singh. Dasaunda Singh was the son of Chaudhari Sahib Rai of village Mansur in the Ferozepur district.

### **(12) Karam Singh Shaheed**

He took possession of a number of villages in the parganahs of Shahzadpur and Kesri, Jarauli, Damdama Sahib and a part of the territory of Rania also came under his control. His family is still represented at Shahzadpur. Quite adjacent to Shahzadpur is the territory of Majri which was occupied by Surat Singh Akali of Anandpur.<sup>4</sup>

### **(13) Desu Singh Dallewalia**

Desu Singh of Alawalpur secured the parganah of Mustafabad in Jagadhri tehsil and of Dera and Tandwala in the Ambala tehsil.

1. *Chiefs and Families of Note*, pp. 306-07.

2. Punjab Government records, *Selections from Notebook* kept by captain G. Birch, 1818-1821, Vol. IX, No. 17, p. 129, as quoted by Dr. H.R. Gupta.

3. Bute Shah, p. 256a.

4. *Ibid*, p. 194;

Khushwaqt Rai, p. 185.

He also captured Arnauli, Sindhuwal Bangai, Amlu and Kulkar Kharyal. In 1767, he founded the principality of Kaithal.<sup>1</sup>

#### **(14) Rai Singh Bhangi**

He seized Buriya Jagadhari and the neighbouring territory consisting of 204 villages in all.<sup>2</sup>

#### **(15) Jodh Singh Karor Singhia**

He appropriated to himself the parganahs of Bassi Chhachrauli and Charak in Ambala district. Karam Singh of village Kalsia took possession of Bilaspur parganah in Jagadhari tehsil. Dayal Singh and Nodh Singh from the same village seized parganahs of Kot and Dharam Kot respectively.

#### **(16) Gurbaksh Singh Shaheed**

He occupied a number of villages in the *bet* tract of the Markanda river.<sup>3</sup>

#### **(17) Nodh Singh Karor Singhia**

He occupied parganah of Leda.<sup>4</sup>

#### **(18) Karam Singh Nirmala**

Mehar Singh of Sindhu Jat seized the parganah of Shahbad and Ismailabad in the Karnal district.<sup>5</sup>

#### **(19) Diwan Singh Lundah Dallewalia**

He took possession of the parganahs of Sikandra, Saran, Akalgarh and Brara in the Ambala district with his headquarters at Sikandra. He belonged to Basti near Amritsar.

#### **(20) Sahib Singh and Gurdit Singh Dallewalia**

These two brothers hailed from the village of Veyeen Pooen of Amritsar district. They were Sansi Jats. They were members of Dallewalia Misl. They seized Ladwa, Indri, Babain and Shah Garh

---

1. Gian Singh, *Panth Parkash*, p. 852.

2. *Chiefs and Families of Note*, pp. 215, 227-28; *Rajas of the Punjab*, p. 46.

3. *Chiefs and Families of Note*, pp. 217-19

4. *Ibid*, pp. 225-26.

5. Bute Shah, pp. 272b, 274a; Khushwaqt Rai, p. 185.

*Chiefs and Families of Note*, p. 216.

territories in the close vicinity of Karnal consisting of 117 villages. Babain was the seat of Sahib Singh nick-named Khondah and Ladwa of Gurdit Singh.<sup>1</sup>

### (21) Mit Singh Dallewalia

He seized the territories of Pehowa and the suburbs of Thanesar and built a strong fort at Kahod. He laid foundation of the principality of Thanesar.<sup>2</sup>

### (22) Baghel Singh Karor Singhia

Baghel Singh seized Khurdin, Kinori, Jamaigarh and Chhaloudi yielding three lakhs annually. Baghel Singh being one of the most noted chiefs dominated the Karor Singhia Misl during the last thirty-five years.

### (23) Dulcha Singh

Dulcha Singh occupied Radaur, 7 miles north-east of Ladwa and Damla.<sup>3</sup>

### (24) Acquisitions of Phulkian Rajas

Ala Singh seized the territories of Pail, Bassi, Letbara and Isru. Hamir Singh of Nabha captured the parganahs of Bahrso, Amlah, Wirro and Bhagso. Man Singh took possession of Malod, while Gajpat Singh of Jind acquired Safidon.<sup>4</sup>

### (25) Nahar Singh and Sarjan Singh

Nahar Singh and Sarjan Singh Sodhi acquired the territories of Anandpur yielding 3 lakhs of rupees a year.<sup>5</sup>

### (26) Jai Singh Nishanwalia<sup>6</sup>

Twenty-seven villages in the parganah of Lidhran and the

- 
1. Bute Shah, pp. 254b, 255a; Khushwaqt Rai, p. 184, Ali-ud-Din, *Ibrat Nama*, p. 126a.
  2. *Rajas of the Punjab*, p. 56. *Chiefs and Families of Note*, p. 183.
  3. He is called Dule Singh by Khushwaqt Rai.
  4. Gian Singh, *Panth Parkash*, p. 852.
  5. *Tarikh-i-Sikhan* by Sarup Lal, p. 150.
  6. *Rajas of the Punjab*, p. 45; *Ludhiana Gazetteer*, 1888, p. 108.



area in Kharar yielding Rs. 6,000 were under his control.

### **(27) Hari Singh Dallewalia**

He seized the territories of Ropar, Sialba, Awankot, Khizerabad, Siswan and Korali. He also captured the fort of Khizerabad built by Chaudhari Tek Chand.<sup>1</sup>

### **(28) Khushal Singh Singhpuria**

He was the nephew of the famous Sardar Kapur Singh Faizalpuria and had succeeded to confederacy in 1753. He in 1764 occupied Chhat Banur, Manauli, Bunga, Bhareli and Chune Machhli.<sup>2</sup>

### **(29) Mathan Singh, Kanwar Singh**

Mathan Singh, Kanwar Singh, Sahib Singh, Bakht Singh, Ram Singh and Jai Singh who were all members of Dallewalia Misl and belonged to village Kang, took possession of the parganah of Kahnuwan consisting of fifty five-villages. These seven chiefs divided the parganah into three parts, set themselves up as independent chiefs.<sup>3</sup>

### **(30) Sawan Singh**

He appropriated to himself several villages around Saonti where he settled down.

### **(31) Gujjar Singh Bhangi**

Gujjar Singh Bhangi occupied Ferozepur, while Jai Singh Gharia who commanded another band of Bhangi seized Khai, Wan and Bajidpur in the neighbourhood of Ferozepur and made them over to their subordinates. The Sikh territory here then contained thirty-seven villages.<sup>4</sup>

### **(32) Tara Singh Ghaiba**

Tara Singh Ghaiba of Dallewalia Misl extended his conquests as far as Ramuwalia and the Mari in the Moga tehsil.

1. Khushwaqt Rai, p. 187; *Tarikh-i-Sikhan* by Sarup Lal, pp. 32-35.

*Jullundur Settlement Report*, 1892, pp. 37-38.

2. *Raj Khalsa*, p. 48; *Tarikh-i-Sikhan*, p. 409

3. Bute Shah, p. 250b.

4. *Ferozepur Gazetteer*, p. 16.

**(33) Mehar Singh Nishanwalia**

He captured several villages in the Zira tehsil of the Ferozepur districts.<sup>1</sup>

**(34) Punjab Singh**

He seized Sadhaura and the neighbouring villages of the Ambala district.<sup>2</sup>

---

1. Khushwaqt Rai, p. 185.

2. Ali-ud-Din, p. 126b.

## Chapter 16

# THE SIKHS AND INDO-GANGETIC DOAB

### Introductory Remarks

No sooner had Abdali recrossed the Indus for the last time, than the Misls began to think that the danger from across the Indus had evaporated and now they were free to establish and expand their respective rules. This tendency was manifest in the Majha and the Jullundur Doab as well as in the Malwa region of the Punjab.

Since the Afghans were quiescent on one side and the Marathas were busy in consolidating their hold on Delhi on the other, the territory between the Indus and the Jamuna was left to the Sikhs and no wonder Misls set about dividing it among themselves and within a very short span of time, the whole of Punjab was occupied by them, except a few Muslim principalities who with the exception of Multan or a few others, were also made to submit to the Sikh Sardars. The cis-Sutlej area of the Punjab was no exception to this general trend. Thirty-five Sikh Sardars divided it among themselves, only a few Muslim<sup>1</sup> and Rajput territories were there, the owners of which saved themselves by coalescing with the powerful Sikh leaders of their neighbourhood and paying them tribute.

With the assurance that their hinterland was secure, the Sikhs of cis-Sutlej states in particular, and other Sikh generals began to expand eastwards. To this purpose, they began to organise inroads into the territory along and across the Jamuna which brought them into conflict with the Jats, Ruhillas, Mughals and Marathas, Rajputs and the English.

What motivated the Sikhs in organising raids onto the territory along and across the Jamuna—is a question which is at once fundamental and relevant to Sikh activities after the invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali.

1. Raikot, Malerkotla, Mamdot and Kotla Nahang were such states.

In their wars with the Mughals and the Durranis, the Sikhs were inspired by the sense of survival, patriotism combined with ire against the intensely communal ruling elite who were notoriously outrageous in their attitude to the Sikh religion and culture. By 1765, they had liberated their mother country and were free to pursue their designs of their own accord. With the mutation of the perspective, earlier motivating factors lost their relevance and various new factors emerged to influence the Sikhs, especially.

In his anxiety to identify those factors, Dr. H.R. Gupta had surmised that "the Sikhs undertook the raids to display power which appeared to them so fascinating and so elevating." He further remarked, that the Sikhs required money badly both to run the administration of the country they had occupied and to look like medieval kings. Revenue from their own lands was paltry and to resort to extortion from their people sounded unbecoming to them. This being their mental framework, they thought it appropriate to raid the Doab area which at that time was the richest part of the country.

Dr. Gupta's surmises are not convincing, being far from historical reality. The Sikhs did not make inroads into Indo-Gangetic Doab impulsively, merely to demonstrate their strength, nor were they motivated by the wealth of the Ganga-Doab. Instead, there were certain cogent reasons. In their protracted struggle, they had learnt that strong Afghanistan or strong Delhi under the Mughals was a potent threat to their rise—much more to their long cherished objective of establishing their own sovereignty in the Punjab. Upto 1765, the Afghan menace had lost its vitality and the Mughal empire in spite of its being in last stage of decline, still had some shine. They rightly reckoned that the Mughal Emperor, howsoever weak and imbecile he might be, had still the aura and could conjure up the sympathy of the people in his favour. This reality had been taken note of alike by the Marathas, Jats, the British and the Sikhs and no wonder each of them was anxious to have hegemonic influence in the Mughal court and to this intent forged designs.

The Sikhs, on their part, forged a grand strategy whose salients were that the Mughals should be squeezed of their financial resources and the Mughal nobility forming the bureaucratic frame-work be demoralised.

To translate their strategy into reality they took recourse to arranging inroads into the Gangetic Doab as no other area could

yield better results. The Doab being rich in wealth and having high profile Mansabdars was undoubtedly the best target. By selecting this target, they weakened Mughal Power and its supportive apparatus, such as administration and the Mansabdari system.

Simultaneously they sent signals to the Marathas who were ambitious enough to establish their dominance over the Mughal Emperor that they would be opposed by the Sikhs if they trespassed into the arena of their selection. Similar was their approach towards other powers contemplating project contrary to their thinking.

The bottom line was that the Sikhs disdained the resurgence of the Mughal Empire as well as domination of any other power including Marathas and the British at Delhi—rather it was glesome to them if the Mughal Empire was all shambles.

Some scholars have averred that the Sikhs' ultimate goal was to establish All India Rule of their own. But this view is erroneous. In the whole range of eighteenth century history, the Sikhs never deliberated on this issue, either at micro level or macro level. They held several Sarbat Khalsa meetings, took important decisions, passed many resolutions of utmost importance; but in no meeting, the issue of establishing Khalsa rule at All India level was brought on agenda. There was not even casual or vicarious reference to it.

At one time in 1784, when the Dal Khalsa led by Jassa Singh Ahluwalia occupied the Red Fort, the central seat of Mughal government and the official residence of the Mughal Emperor, certain loud-mouthed persons indulged in loud talk of establishing Khalsa rule in place of the Mughals. But this was done in a peculiar situation when the Sikhs being victorious were highly exultant and excited. Even at that moment no high-profile leader cared to spare a few moments to give thought to this issue. All the time, they were busy at hammering out settlement with the Mughal Emperor regarding their share out of the income of Mughal government, and the care, the Sikh shrines should get from it. Very shortly, the Sikhs retraced their steps to Punjab.

Had the Sikhs been serious enough to establish All India Rule, they should have done a lot of ground work. They should have deliberated among themselves and with all others who were willing to lend helping hands upon the possible hurdles on the way along with attended remedies. Further, they were expected to gauge reactions of the Marathas and the British who were likely

to contend them, being ambitious and expansionist in their outlook. Since the Khalsa ideology did not recommend autocratic rule either of an individual or of a community, they were of necessity, obligated to think of some political and administrative framework to reflect fresh approach to the structuring of the government and the governance. No such exercise was made, not even conceived. The Sikhs were in a hurry to go back to their own lands which fell in Malwa and trans-Sutlej regions.

They did not entertain any notion of establishing their rule over the whole of India. After the danger of foreign invasions was over after 1765, the Sikh chiefs began to carve out their own principalities. "Horsemen galloped madly in different directions claiming village after village by the simple act of leaving a personal token like a turban or a shoe to mark their ownership. Now there was no danger from abroad and plenty of land to appropriate, the Misl organisation began to lack cohesion. The only reason why men continued own allegiance to some Misl or the other was to safeguard their own possessions or add to them. As soon as they reached the limit prescribed by foreign powers they had no option but to turn against each other." The Sarbat Khalsa became a snake with 'many heads', did not evolve any structure either to galvanise the Khalsa thus fragmented and committed only to their self-interests. They became incapable to pursue causes which required large visions, concerted efforts and capacity to transcend narrow approaches.

### **Incursion of the Sikhs into Indo-Gangetic Doab**

The Sikhs took Sirhind on January 14, 1764 and by the middle of February poured into the upper Gangetic Doab by crossing the Jamuna at Buriya Ghat. This was Buddha Dal as Taruna Dal had gone back to the Punjab immediately after the fall of Sirhind. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia along with other Sikh chiefs, such as Khushal Singh, Baghel Singh Krossinghia, Sham Singh, Tara Singh Ghaiba, Gurbakhsh Singh, Banga Singh, Karam Singh and Rae Singh at the head of about 40000 horse plundered Saharanpur, Shamli, Kandlah, Kankhal, Najibabad, Nagina, Moradabad, Chandausi, Anup Shahar and Garhmukteshwar. Najib-ud-Daula, the Amir-ud-Daula and the Mir Bakhsh of the Mughal Empire whose territories included among those raided by the Sikhs by fast movement arrived near them and instead of fighting against them preferred to buy peace because he was to face a more



determined enemy, namely Jawahar Singh Jat, ruler of Bharatpur whose father Najib was defeated and slain.

In November-December 1764, the Sikhs again crossed the Jamuna. This time they were prompted by Jawahar Singh who burnt with the desire to take revenge of his father's death. The Sikhs after crossing Jamuna at Buriya Ghat looted crown lands around Delhi. They also besieged Delhi. They ravaged the suburbs of the city and the territory around it so thoroughly that their visitation was counted as the most terrible one which ever befell this unfortunate country.<sup>1</sup>

In early January, 1765, the Sikhs arrived at Buriya Ghat, 20 kms from the city of Delhi. This time Jawahar Singh approached them for joining him in his attempt to teach Najib a lesson.

According to Nur-ud-Din, an eye-witness, "Jawahar Singh crossed the river Jamunā and went to interview the Sikhs. But here his relations with them did not become friendly. They hindered the driver of the elephant carrying Jawahar Singh from coming to the assembly for interview. More than a hundred Sardars, as arranged, came and interviewed him. The conference commenced with a prayer, which in Sikh religious parlance is called Ardas. In it they said, "Jawahar Singh, the son of Surajmal, has come under the shelter of Khalsa Jiu and become a Sikh of Nanak. He is demanding redress for his father's blood."

They drove out Huqqa-bearer of Jawahar Singh with impudence. All this was unsavoury to the Raja but he could not help it. In the conference it was decided that the Sikhs would launch fight and dig trenches in the direction from which they had come, namely the north of the city (Delhi), the Sabahdai (Malhar) and Jawahar Singh should fight as before from the eastern side while the Sikh horsemen would reconnoitre the country on the west so as to cut off provisions from the city totally.

The fighting went on for nearly twenty days but the result was not decisive. The Sikhs plundered Sabzi Mandi area, and gave a very hard time to Najib killing his soldiers in a very large number.

The fighting was still going on in Delhi, when the news reached that Ahmad Shah Abdali was advancing towards Delhi in aid of Najib. The Sikhs at once wound up and retired to the Punjab even without asking leave of Jawahar Singh.

In October, 1765, the Sikhs again decided to invade the

---

1. *Gulistan-e-Rehmat*, 84-85; G.R.C. William, *Calcutta Review*, ix, January, 1875, pp. 26-27.

country of Najib-ud-Daula. The Taruna Dal crossed the Jamuna at Buriya Ghat and entered Saharanpur district while the Buddha Dal consisting of 25000 horse under the leadership of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Tara Singh, Sham Singh and other Sardars attacked Najib's Jagirs in the country north of Delhi. They after ravaging the villages in the environs of Delhi and in Saharanpur retreated. The retreat was mainly due to the fact that they intended to celebrate Diwali at Darbar Sahib complex.

Soon after the Diwali celebrations, they came to Gangetic Doab and commenced plundering Najib's villages. Najib met them near Shamli, 20 kms east of Karnal. A fierce battle raged between the Sikhs and Najib's forces. The Sikhs gave a hard time to Najib but in the darkness of night, they crossed Jamuna with all their baggage. This happened in December, 1765.

In January-February 1766, just after the battle of Shamli, the Taruna Dal advanced towards Delhi and joined the Buddha Dal in the neighbourhood of Kharkhauda, east of Rohtak and 32 kms from Delhi. The Sikhs instead of fighting against Najib who was keeping a close watch on their movements marched onward plundering and pillaging the country of Jat Raja a little south of Delhi. The Raja (Jawahar Singh) bought peace by giving them a subsidy of seven lakh rupees. In doing so, Jawahar Singh had a motive, he wanted to hire a body of them to assist him against the Marathas who were hardpressing him. The Sikhs did help him and in the process accompanied him to attack Jaipur to divert the concentration of Maratha forces on the frontier of Jat kingdom and looted places such as Kotputli et al along with the forces of the Raja. Realising that the Sikhs' help to Jawahar Singh had made him formidable, Madho Singh Raja of Jaipur bribed them with the result that Jawahar Singh was forced to retire to his own country.

Shortly after, the Sikhs in conjunction with the forces of Jawahar Singh defeated the Marathas near Dholpur (March 13-14, 1766). Jawahar Singh wanted to advance upon Malhar Rao Holkar then a dying man and lying encamped beyond the Chambal. But as the Sikhs were not willing to proceed to grassless and waterless tract, he had to abandon his project.

The Sikhs were escorted out of his kingdom by Jawahar Singh. They approached Delhi and began to loot Najib's Jagir. At their approach near the Imperial Capital, Afzal Khan, the agent of Najib, proclaimed on the 15th April by beat of drum that none from the city should go out to visit Kalka Devi. He himself along

with Yakub Khan took up his position at the Delhi Gate of the city. On the 17th April, 1766, the Sikhs marching from Okhla Ghat looted rice and sugar in the Partapgarh market.

The Sikhs then marched upto the east bank of the Jamuna and raided Katana, Jhanjhua and Badhana. Now Najib had arrived near Delhi. He at once marched towards them and engaged them in the neighbourhood of Kandhala (30 kms south of Panipat). The Sikhs suffered a great loss, crossed the Jamuna and reached the places near their own administration.

They again fell plundering the districts of Najib to the west of Jamuna. Najib gave them a hot pursuit but he was very much hardpressed by them. In these engagements, Amar Singh of Patiala had given considerable assistance to Najib. This fact aroused ire of the Sikhs against him.

In May, 1767, the Sikhs again entered the territory of Najib-ud-Daula under the very eyes of Abdali. Then leaving their families and effects in the jungles of Rohtak, Bhatinda, Hissar region crossed the Jamuna at Buriya Ghat. They sacked the districts of Saharanpur, Ambetah and Nanauta. After this they directed their attention to the Barah Sadat settlement or a cluster of twelve Sayyed villages around Miranpur in Muzaffarnagar district. Then they stormed Meerut. Najib solicited help from Ahmad Shah Abdali who was still in the country. Jahan Khan, the Commander-in-chief of Ahmad Shah Abdali, at once came to his help. The Sikhs were overtaken between Shamli and Kairanah, two important towns on the western side of Muzaffarnagar district. The Sikhs suffered defeat but only after inflicting a considerable loss on the enemy forces.

In December 1767, they again made their inroads into the territory of Najib. They desolated the town of Nanauta with impunity. Najib rushed and overtook them at Islam Nagar, a Pathan colony in the Nakur tehsil of Saharanpur district. A battle raged in which Najib came out successful, awfully exhausted. Several Sardars of distinction were killed and wounded in the battle.<sup>1</sup> The Sikhs retreated to Saharanpur and finally retired by Raj Ghat. This was Najib's last triumph.

On the retirement of the Sikhs from the Ganga Doab to their own territories Najib went to Aonla where he celebrated the marriage of his son Kala Khan. The Sikhs finding him absorbed in these nuptial festivities again spread in the parganas of Karnal and Panipat and ravaged the Imperial domains. Najib moved from

1. C.P.C. II, 776.

Aonla and by forced marches arrived at Delhi wherefrom he marched towards the Sikhs. Various battles were fought. Ultimately Najib was defeated. The Sikh Sardar Jai Singh recalled all the Sikh bands then in Bharatpur with Jawahar Singh to ravage Najib's lands.

Having defeated Najib, the Sikhs marched towards Delhi and menaced the Imperial city. Masavi Khan, the Emperor's agent was too weak to take a stand. The city was looted and pillaged thoroughly. According to a Marathi despatch, Najib suffered another defeat in December, 1768. This was the last battle which he fought with the Sikhs. Najib died in 1770.

In January 1770, the Sikhs received invitation from Jats of Bharatpur to which they readily responded, expecting a rich reward. The occasion came in the wake of Jawahar Singh's death in June 1768. Ratan Singh who succeeded to Jawahar Singh was murdered by his Brahmin priest, Gosain Rupanand on the 8th April 1769. Dan Singh, the Commander-in-Chief of the Jat forces became regent for Ratan Singh's young son Kesari Singh. The late ruler's brothers, Nawal Singh and Ranjit Singh, united to overthrow the Regent who was not of royal blood but a Jat of ordinary descent. Soon both the brothers fell out over the distribution of power. Nawal Singh cleverly won over the influential courtier and Ranjit Singh had to seek shelter in the fort of Kumbher.

Ranjit Singh, in exasperation, invited the Sikhs of the cis-Sutlej territory to his assistance. The Sikhs readily agreed.

Sikhs moved to help Ranjit Singh. On the way on January 4, 1770, they plundered and ravaged the country around Panipat. This was the estate of Najib-ud-Daula who was lying ill at Delhi. His son Zabita Khan came to oppose him. An engagement took place between the two, but it decided nothing. The Sikhs proceeded further ravaging villages on the way. Zabita Khan kept a close watch on them and maintained it till they had passed the Ruhilla estate. Immediately after this, the Sikhs entered the Doab and encamped near Aligarh. The Sikhs then reached Chunar where Samru reached to bring about peace between the Jats and the Sikhs and to use these forces in the cause of Mir Qasim against the British Government. But the deliberations did not yield any fruitful result and the Sikhs returned to their former encampment near Aligarh. A Jat force under the supreme command of Nawal Singh followed them. The Sikhs, heedless of pursuing force, started plundering the Jat villages.

The Jat army, in pursuit of the Sikhs, was divided into three parts: the advance-guard under the charge of Rene Medec and Gopal Rao Maratha, main body under Nawal Singh and the rear-guard. A fierce engagement took place between the advance-guard and the Sikhs. On the 24th February, 1770, the Maratha general being wounded with a musket-shot was disabled for further action. The Maratha cavalry under his charge also suffered heavily, Medec's men did not fare better and had to take shelter in a village which was surrounded by the Sikhs. Just at this time, one thousand musketeers and some cavalry of the main body came to the rescue of the vanguard. Even this aid could not dishearten the Sikhs who continued to pressurize the enemy. Just at this critical juncture, the whole of the Jat army reached the scene. The Sikhs immediately raised the siege of the village and took to flight. In this attack almost all the Jat chiefs were wounded with the exception of the French chief with one or two of his Europeans. The total loss of the Jats amounted to four or five hundred killed and wounded, with more than the double the enemy left in the field.

The Sikhs while retreating ravaged many villages in the Jat dominion in the neighbourhood of Delhi. According to Dr. H.R. Gupta they also looted the suburbs of Delhi.<sup>1</sup>

After the expedition into the Jat country, the Sikhs spent their time in managing the domestic affairs after which they carried several plundering raids into the neighbouring district of Panipat. The opportunity was provided to them by the death of the strong man, Najib-ud-Daula, Amir-ul-Umara or the Mir Bakhshi of the Mughal Empire. Zabita Khan, the son and successor of Najib-ud-Daula was no doubt intelligent and a man of determination, but he had to take some time to consolidate and project himself to be man of nerves and prowess.

"This tract in which were situated the cities of Sonapat, Panipat and Karnal had become a prey to complete anarchy in the third quarter of the 18th century. It formed a sort of no man's land between the Sikhs and the Maratha powers coveted by both but protected by the neither. It fell a victim to every free-booter who happened to come that way."<sup>2</sup>

1. N.A.I., Select Proceedings, Bengal Select Committee, 28th March, 1770, pp. 120-4.

2. Dr. H.R. Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. II.



The next eruption of the Sikhs took place in 1773. A large body of the Sikhs under the leadership of Karam Singh Shahid over-ran a large area. The territory belonged to Zabita Khan. They also sacked Nanautah (11th December, 1773) and Jalalabad. According to Ratan Singh Bhangu, the attention of the Sikhs was drawn to this place by a Brahmin who complained that his married daughter had been forcibly seized by Sayyed Hasan Khan, the chief of the place. The Sikhs tied the chief to a cot and then having wrapped him in straw, burnt him alive. His agent, a Hindu Kalal who used to inform of the beautiful Hindu girl was also hanged. The girl was restored to her husband who was provided a handsome amount by the Sikhs in order to assure good treatment for the girl.<sup>1</sup>

Next year i.e. in January-June, 1774, the Sikhs appeared again in the royal dominion near Delhi. On the 18th January, 1774, the Sikhs devastated Shahdara. The Emperor was helpless and he decided to buy the Sikhs off. Just at this moment, Abdul Ahad Khan, when the proposal for settlement with the Sikhs was going to materialise, got for himself the faujdari of Sirhind in the name of Prince Farkhanda who appointed Samru his deputy. For about three months, Samru tried his best to overcome the Sikh menace but he could not succeed, rather he was defeated by the Sikhs in open engagement. Towards the end of October 1774, Samru was dismissed from the service by the Emperor upon the request of the Governor of Bengal. In October, Abdul Ahad Khan again entered into negotiations with the Sikh chiefs with a view to securing immunity for the royal domain from their depredations. These negotiations came to nothing and the Sikhs ravaged the area in the neighbourhood of Shahjahanabad.<sup>2</sup>

Next year, that is to say, early 1775, the Sikhs had an encounter with Rahimdad Khan Ruhilla, who had been appointed Governor of Panipat and who within a short period captured Hansi and Hissar and who now attacked Gajpat Singh and laid siege to Jind with a view to convert his territories into a single solid block. Gajpat Singh sought assistance from Amar Singh of Patiala who despatched Diwan Nanumal with a strong contingent. Hamir Singh of Nabha, the Bhais of Kaithal and several other Sikh chiefs also

1. Ratan Singh, *Prachin Panth Parkash*, pp. 550-4.

Gian Singh, *Shamsber Khalsa*, pp. 111-12.

2. C.P.C., IV, 1359, 1538.



joined him. The combined forces engaged Rahimdad Khan in a desperate fight in which he was struck by a bullet in the eye and was instantly killed. His troops took to flight. Griffin says, "Trophies of victory are still preserved at Jind and the tomb of the Khan is to be seen within the principal gate." Gajpat Singh in the company of Patiala forces conquered Gohana and annexed to Jind. Hissar, Hansi and Rohtak were occupied by Amar Singh. Soon after the Sikh chiefs made peace with Najaf Khan, the first Minister of the Empire. As per settlement Amar Singh of Patiala surrendered the districts of Hissar, Hansi and Rohtak and was permitted to retain Sirsa, Rania and Fatehabad. In return for these territories, the Raja promised to pay an annual tribute. Gajpat Singh returned seven villages from the lands he had seized.<sup>1</sup>

### **Sikh-Ruhilla Alliance**

Next round of inroads into the Doab territory was conducted by the Sikhs in April 1775. The Sikhs gathered their forces near Karnal, and organised them into three big divisions under the leadership of Rai Singh Bhangi, Tara Singh Ghaiba, Dallewalia and Baghel Singh Karorsinghia. They crossed the Jamuna at Begi Ghat on the 22nd April, 1775. Zabita Khan was so much terrified that he immediately retreated from Garhi Duhtar also known as Garhi Mian Bhai Khan (24 miles north-west of Muzaffarnagar) to his fortified place, Ghausgarh. The Turko-mans of Lakhnauti were the first to bear the brunt. Gangoh was attacked next. A Sikh contingent visited Ambahta and received Rs. 2000 from its *faujdar*. Afterwards they besteged Deoband. Taza Beg, the officer of the place put up stout resistance but failed to stem the tide of the Sikh invaders. The Sikhs, irritated at his obstinate resistance vented their spleen upon the commandant with savage cruelty. His limbs were swathed in cotton well steeped in oil, and fire being applied to the covering, he was carefully roasted to death.

From Deoband the Sikhs turned to Ghausgarh, the head-quarter of Zabita Khan. Zabita Khan who had realised the futility of the resistance paid them Rs. 50,000 and entered into a friendly alliance with them.

Zabita Khan at this stage was experiencing a psychological crisis. For some time he had been in disfavour of the Delhi court. The reasons were not far to seek. Immediately after the death of

---

1. Dr. H.R. Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. II, pp. 55-6.

Najib-ud-Daula, Shah Alam who was at Allahabad, sent to Najib's eldest son Zabita Khan, condolences, a robe of investiture for the office of Mir Bakhshi, and the title of Amir-ul-Umra, and invited him to escort him to Delhi. Zabita Khan declined to the displeasure of the Emperor.

Having entered Delhi with the help of the Marathas, Shah Alam invited Zabita Khan to attend the coronation and pay tribute which he again honoured by defying. The Emperor punished him by sending an expedition under the stewardship of Najaf Khan. Zabita Khan had to sue for peace which was readily granted. The Emperor also restored his estates in Saharanpur, Meerut and Najibabad.

Just at this time Abdul Ahad Khan, a Kashmiri confidant of the Emperor, 'second Mir Bakhshi' of the Emperor and sworn opponent of Najaf Khan invited Zabita to Delhi and tried to incite him to unite all the Afghans under him in order to overthrow Najaf Khan. Zabita Khan who was aware of his own weakness and also the cost he was expected to pay for embroiling himself in the Delhi politics, did not agree to the proposal of Ahad Khan. The all-powerful pet of the Emperor grew furious and resolved to ruin him. Under such circumstances it was but natural that Zabita Khan should enter into a friendly treaty with the Sikhs who were one of the great powers in northern India, and who could be of great help to him in his project of teaching a lesson to the Delhi people.

Accordingly, the Sikhs accompanied by Zabita Khan started plundering royal domain with impunity. They ravaged Barha Sadat villages such as Miranpur and Kythorah. They ravaged Shamli, Kairana, Kandlah and Marut and re-crossed the Jamuna at the Kutana Ghat. They swept through the crown lands upto the close neighbourhood of Delhi. The Sikhs continued their depredations for more than three months. On the 15th July, 1775, the Sikhs set on fire and destroyed Paharganj and Jai Singhpora.<sup>1</sup>

The Imperial troops offered some resistance, and about sixty persons were killed on both sides. Zabita Khan penetrated as far south as Khurja and laid the whole country waste, but was finally defeated by Najaf Khan at Meerut and the Sikhs were compelled to return to their homes.

Abdul Ahad Khan who had felt very much exasperated, matured his plans for punishing this refractory chief. He prevailed

1. C.P.C., IV, 1721, *Delhi Chronicle*, p. 289.

upon the Emperor to send an expedition against Zabita Khan who readily agreed. Abdul Ahad Khan then got his brother Abdul Qasim appointed as the faujdar of the Saharanpur district in October 1775. He was provided with two battalions of trained sepoys commanded by Gangaram and Bhawani Singh.

Abdul Qasim was reluctant to lead the expedition, but then he could not say no to his brother. He advanced upto the upper Doab but the Ruhillas did not offer any opposition. He, therefore, started negotiations with Zabita Khan, but Abdul Ahad did not approve of his peaceful policy and urged him for an action.

Zabita Khan, in the meanwhile, secured the help of the Sikh chiefs, Desu Singh of Kaithal, Rai Singh, Dulha Singh, Diwan Singh, Bhag Singh, Sahib Singh Khondah, Baghel Singh and Hardukam Singh. The allied troops met the Imperial forces at Budhana and after an indecisive battle retreated to Baghra. Zabita Khan took his position at Amir Nagar. Abdul Qasim attacked here on the 11th March, 1776. In the fight that ensued, Abdul Qasim was killed and the Imperial forces ran away. Ganga Ram and Bhawani Singh took shelter in the mud fort of Garhi Duhtar. The Sikhs invested the fort immediately. They held out against the Sikhs for two days, then surrendered themselves to Zabita Khan on the condition of immediate release without arms.

Zabita Khan put the corpse of Abdul Qasim in a coffin and sent it to Abdul Ahad Khan with a letter of apology ascribing his death to the will of God. He did so out of regard for the friendship of his late father with Abdul Ahad Khan.

After this, Zabita Khan led the Sikhs to Delhi. Just at this time, unsuccessful attempts were made by the Nawab of Oudh to win over the Sikhs to alienate them from Zabita Khan, to seek their assistance for himself and the English in expelling Zabita Khan and other Ruhilla chiefs from the Gangetic Doab and establishing there rule of the Nawab Wazir of Oudh. Since these efforts bore no fruit, the Sikhs remained devoted to Zabita Khan who, with their help, lost no time in capturing Meerut, Hapur, Khurja and Sikandara. According to Polier, "He had, in consequence of his victory laid hold of almost all the country which the king possessed between the Jamuna and the Ganges."

At this critical juncture, Abdul Ahad Khan sent written assurances of friendship to Mansukh Rai the Vakil of Zabita Khan, and desired him to request his master to seek the Emperor's pardon by personal attendance. Zabita Khan, at the instance of his Vakil

in whom he had full confidence reached Delhi at the head of a large Sikh and Ruhilla force, presented himself before the Emperor on the 6th June, 1776 and secured his pardon.

But Abdul Ahad Khan had ulterior aim; he wanted to gain by cunning what he had failed to achieve by force. He, very tactfully managed to get the Sikh allies and a part of the Ruhilla force dismissed when he was left with only 4000 Ruhillas. Abdul Ahad invited Zabita Khan to dinner, and the plan was to kill Zabita Khan when he would start dining. When Zabita Khan entered the palace of Abdul Ahad Khan, he smelt foul play. He sent a note regarding all this to his Munshi who requested Raja Shyam Lal, a confidant of Abdul Ahad, without whose advice he did nothing. At the suggestion of the Raja, Abdul Ahad Khan dropped his plan.

Zabita Khan did not forget the insult to which he was subjected. This was the reason he became more refractory than ever before. At Abdul Ahad's persuasion the Emperor decided upon fighting with Zabita Khan. The nominal office of Mir Bakhshi and the title of Amir-ul-Umra were taken away from him, and were conferred on Najaf Khan who was invested with the chief command of this expedition.

When the Imperial army was marching towards Ghausgarh, Zabita Khan invited the Sikhs to his aid. Seven thousand Sikh horsemen at once reached to his aid. His Ruhilla force numbered 15,000 and in this way, the total strength came to be twenty-two thousand soldiers.

The first clash between the Ruhilla forces and the Mughal army took place on 23rd May, 1777. Zabita Khan himself led the Ruhillas. Latafat Ali Khan and Najaf Khan generalled the Mughal forces. A warm action resulted and the Mughal force began to gain ground upon Zabita Khan till late in the evening when he retired to Ghausgarh leaving two thousand men in the field to watch Najaf Khan's movements. Najaf Khan had upper hand in the contest, but the strain was so great that he had to take about a fortnight to re-organise his troops.

On the 8th June, 1777, Najaf Khan delivered an assault on Lahore. The Ruhilla patrol after a little fighting, fell back. The Mughals gave them a hot pursuit but were caught in an ambush. However, Najaf Khan's artillery rained heavy fire on Zabita's Sikhs. At sunset, the engagement broke off and neither party could claim victory.

A second attack was made by the Imperial army on the 11th June, 1777, but the result was no better than that of the first. A third attack of the Mughal forces on Thana Bhawan also met a similar fate.

Najaf Khan naturally was much upset. He then employed his whole army in regular battle on the 23rd June, 1777. No doubt, the battle was fought with greater fury and bloodshed, but it also ended in a fiasco.

The reason for Najaf Khan's failure was the jealousy of Abdul Ahad Khan who was determined to cross every plan of Najaf Khan so as to rob him of the credit of victory. Najaf Khan was no doubt the Mir Bakhshi or supreme head of the army but Abdul Ahad, the grey beard had got himself nominated as second Bakhshi. His absolute sway over Shah Alam's mind turned him into the *de facto* commander-in-chief over the head of Mirza Najaf.<sup>1</sup>

Najaf Khan however remained as determined as ever in his resolve to bring the Ruhilla chief to kneel down. In the meanwhile the Sikhs and the Ruhillas continued to harass the Imperial army by cutting off their supply and provisions.

Najaf Khan, to see his objective consummated, tried to alienate the Sikhs from Zabita Khan and to win over some of the Ruhilla chiefs. The Sikhs refused to desert but Dilawar Ali and Qalandar Ali, the Pathan chiefs of Jalalabad, agreed to join the Imperial army when the trenches under their control would be assaulted.

Having done all this Najaf Khan opened his fourth campaign in September 1777. Afrasiyab Khan from Aligarh and Daud Beg Khan from Agra had also joined him. The entire Mughal force was put in motion. The vanguard was led by Afrasiyab. The main onset was made on the Jalalabad trenches, while stray parties detained the Ruhilla forces at other centres.

Zabita Khan came from Ghausgarh to oppose the assailants. Jalalabad chiefs, as pre-planned, played their treacherous part and guided the enemy through the trenches and the town. The Ruhillas fought desperately but were overpowered by the sheer force of numbers. Only the Sikhs held their own at Thana Bhawan.<sup>2</sup>

Zabita Khan was hopelessly defeated. He fled to the Sikh camp. His entire camp, including his women and personal treasure

---

1. Sarkar, J.N., *Fall of the Mughals*, Vol. III, pp. 137-38.

2. Dr. H.R. Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. II, p. 71.

fell into the hands of the enemy. Even his son Ghulam Qadir was arrested by them.

Zabita Khan and his Sikh allies returned towards Karnal. Zabita Khan had nothing except the clothes he was putting on. He was much impressed by the doggedness and tenacity with which the Sikhs had clung to his cause. At the same time, he felt a rude shock at the treachery played on him by the Pathan chiefs.

The fidelity and good treatment of the Sikhs who were neither his kins nor his co-religionists on the one hand, and the treachery of his co-religionists and kins on the other hand, formed a great psychological crisis which gripped him tightly. Ultimately, he declared himself a convert to Sikhism, took 'Pahul' or initiatory rite, and assumed new name of Dharam Singh. This memorable event gave rise to the following proverb still current in the Saharanpur district :

एक गुरु का दो चेला  
आधा सिख आधा रोहीला ।

[A religious guide had two disciples half Sikh and half Ruhilla]

The political effect of his conversion to Sikhism was that he came close to the Sikhs. His defeat, however, completely shattered the power of the Ruhilla family founded by Najib-ud-Daula.

The Sikhs in alliance with Zabita Khan did not sit still. They, after rainy season was over, made a plan to raid the Doab. The situation was favourable to them. Najaf Khan had gone out of Delhi and was deeply involved in a war against the Raja of Alwar. The Sikhs and Zabita Khan resolved to avail themselves of the absence of Najaf Khan. "They re-entered the Doab scourging the whole country between the rivers. Many of the more powerful Zamindars, moreover, took advantage of the general confusion and played the jackal to the Sikh Lion."<sup>1</sup> They advanced as far as Buland Shahar where they were opposed by Afrasiyab Khan who eventually drove them back (April 1778). According to Dr. Hari Ram Gupta, "The Imperial forces compelled the Sikh chiefs to come to a settlement with them. The Sikhs, as per settlement, promised not to harbour Najaf Khan's enemies. The Sikhs, however, attached no importance to this settlement. They neither surrendered Zabita Khan nor gave up their plans of spoil."

The Sikhs resumed their ravaging activities in September 1778, in the neighbourhood of Delhi. In this undertaking, they were

1. *Calcutta Review*, LX, 1875, p. 35.



probably instigated by Zabita Khan, as this was the only means of securing good treatment for his family now captive at Agra. The Imperial court felt much perturbed. Najaf Khan being away, Abdul Ahad Khan decided to win over the Sikhs by entering into an alliance with them with a view to making the capital safe and using them in his plans to undermine the prestige of Najaf Khan.

The Sikhs stayed at Delhi for about a month at the expense of Abdul Ahad Khan. They did not plunder Delhi, but they did not spare the territory of Doab. They even entered Ruhilkhand wherefrom they retraced their steps shortly owing to the prospective resistance of the British.

Brahm Kali Khan welcomed and entertained with a feast Sahib Singh (Khondah) and other chiefs who lay encamped near the Shalamar gardens. Mullah Khan, son of Najib-ud-Daula, who was with the Sikhs, came into the city on September 26, 1776. Ahad Khan visited the Sikhs in the garden of Yakub Ali Khan.<sup>1</sup> The Sikhs celebrated Dussehra at Delhi. They went to Rakab Ganj and demolished a mosque raised at the spot of the cremation of Guru Tegh Bahadur. According to *Delhi Chronicle*, the Jihad in the path of Allah taught them 'Jihad in the path of the Guru'.

In May 1779, the Sikhs again began to devastate the environs of Delhi. The Emperor alarmed and issued urgent orders to Najaf Khan to rush back from Alwar. Najaf Khan hurriedly concluded peace with the Raja and proceeded to Delhi to oppose the incursions of the Sikhs who had reached to suburbs of Delhi.

On approaching Delhi, Najaf Khan opened negotiations with the Sikhs for a peaceful settlement. He knew that in the midst of Abdul Ahad's intrigues he would not succeed in punishing the Sikhs. He, therefore, appealed to them in the name of their religion to stop despoiling the crown lands. The Sikhs agreed. Najaf Khan, afterwards considered it advisable to conciliate Zabita Khan with a view to making use of his services in relation to the Sikhs. He gave Zabita Khan assurances of full safety and called him to Delhi. He treated Zabita Khan nicely and restored to him his family, lands and districts of Saharanpur. Zabita, in order to strengthen his alliance with the first Minister of the State, married his daughter to him.

At this juncture, both the parties forgot to consult the Sikhs. So far as Zabita Khan was concerned, the Sikhs never expected from him that he would ignore them while contracting friendly

1. *Delhi Chronicle*, 310.

alliance with Najaf Khan. Consequently, they considered him a renegade and made his possessions the scene of the same rapine and destruction that had marked their earlier eruptions.<sup>1</sup>

On approaching Delhi, Najaf Khan realised that neither he nor the Marathas were strong enough to deal with the Sikhs. The astute Irani turned to diplomacy. He appealed to Zabita Khan to return to the Muslim fold; he flattered the Sikh Sardars as protectors of the empire, and he sowed the seeds of discord among the Malwais. He succeeded in doing all these at the same time. Zabita Khan deserted the Sikhs, went over to the Mughal camp, and cemented his new alliance by giving his daughter in marriage to Najaf Khan. According to Khushwant Singh, "the Sikhs spared the Imperial domains and instead turned to plundering each other. Within a few months the dissensions in the ranks of the Malwais had come to such a pass that the Mughals felt strong enough to take the offensive against them."

### **Abdul Ahad's Patiala Campaign (18th June to 18th October, 1779)**

In A.D. 1779, Abdul Ahad led a campaign against the Raja of Patiala. The causes which prompted him to do so were not far to seek. Firstly, he was stung by deep feelings of jealousy and rivalry against Najaf Khan. He persuaded Shah Alam to believe that Najaf Khan wanted to become the dictator like Najib-ud-Daula, and to reduce the Emperor to a mere figure-head. Besides this, he fanned the Emperor's religious and racial sentiments against Najaf Khan as he was Irani and Shia. The credulous Emperor was deceived by the crafty Kashmiri and showed his readiness to do anything to bring about the fall of Najaf Khan. Abdul Ahad Khan, with a view to achieving his object, must invest himself with military glory. Secondly, the Sikh chiefs of cis-Sutlej area had started fighting among one another. Accordingly Abdul Ahad thought it practicable to march into their territories to exact tribute from them and to re-establish Mughal sovereignty.

According to Dr. H.R. Gupta, "When Abdul Ahad was maturing these plans he received a petition from Raja Amar Singh of Patiala for help against his co-religionists with whom he was at war. The Sikh leaders who were present in Delhi incited him to conquer not only the cis-Sutlej territory, but also to recover the

1. *Muzaffar Nagar District Gazetteer*, p. 78.

provinces of Lahore and Multan for the Empire, promising their full support."

Abdul Ahad accepted the terms of the Sikhs, and he along with the Prince Mirza Jahan Khan Farkhanda Bakht, started their campaign with effect from the 18th June, 1779.

At Karnal many Sikh chiefs including Sahib Singh Khondah, Diwan Singh, Baghel Singh and Karam Singh Nirmala waited upon the Nawab. A little later, Gajpat Singh the Zamindar of Karnal, the most loyal Sikh Sardar of the Emperor paid his homage to the Prince. At the suggestion of Baghel Singh who bore a long-standing hostility to Gajpat Singh, Abdul Ahad Khan imprisoned him. Gajpat Singh, however, secured his release by paying two lakhs of rupees.<sup>1</sup> According to Tahmas Khan Miskin, "Gajpat Singh soon became the chief confidant and sole adviser in all the business of the government."

Abdul Ahad Khan regulated his march according to Gajpat Singh's instructions and guidance. He enlisted every Sikh who came in search of service. He appointed Sikh military posts in places where the inhabitants had fled away in fear of the royal troops. Various other Sardars also paid their tributes to Abdul Ahad Khan at Karnal, joined him and persuaded him to fight against Raja Amar Singh. Abdul Ahad Khan lured by the bright prospect of booty and tribute, readily accepted their advice and pushed on to Thanesar.

At Thanesar, Desu Singh was presented to Abdul Ahad Khan by Baghel Singh and Nigahi Mal who introduced him thus, "Desu Singh has arrived. His country which has been taken possession of by Amar Singh may be restored to him." Desu Singh offered a Nazar of five gold coins, two bows, five cotton bed-sheets and two horses. He was granted a Khillat of five pieces, a sarpech and a sword, while two doshalas were given to his companions. Abdul Ahad demanded three lakhs of rupees from Desu Singh as tribute which he later raised to five lakhs. Desu Singh pleaded his inability to pay because of his incapacity, but Ahad Khan insisted. Ultimately, the Diwan paid four lakhs of rupees as tribute and he was given a royal rescript confirming Desu Singh in his estates. Rai Singh of Buriya, Bhaga Singh and Bhag Singh also joined the Imperial camp at Thanesar. Shortly after, Mehar Singh, Karam Singh and quite a few other Sardars joined the Imperial camp. These chiefs offered their services to the Emperor partly to crush their

1. Dr. H.R. Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. II, p. 80.

opponents with the assistance of king's forces and partly to plunder the territory of the Raja of Patiala at whose domination they were chafing.<sup>1</sup>

After this, the Nawab concentrated on the plans to exact tribute and submission from Raja Amar Singh of Patiala who knowing full well the working of the mind of the Nawab, sent his Diwan Nanumal to settle the amount of the tribute. Nanumal tried his best to settle the amount of the tribute but he failed. Abdul Ahad insisted upon Amar Singh's personal interview and demanded thirty lakhs of rupees. The intentions of the Nawab seemed to be to keep Amar Singh in detention until a large sum of money covering all the expenses of the expedition was paid by him. Amar Singh knew all this and had made up his mind not to appear in the Imperial camp at all.

On the 30th September, 1779, Amar Singh agreed to pay a personal visit to the Imperial camp to settle the amount of tribute. Nawab Abdul Ahad Khan felt extremely elated at this news and appointed his men—Sayyed Ali Khan, Taj Muhammad Khan and Raja Daya Ram to receive Raja Amar Singh at a distance from the camp. But Amar Singh did not turn up at the fixed date. As a matter of fact, he could not shed off his suspicions about his treatment in the Imperial camp.

Nothing but war was to decide the issue. Accordingly, Abdul Ahad Khan lost no time in sending a strong detachment to attack Patiala on the 7th October, 1779. Amar Singh assisted by Tara Singh Ghaiba fought well but the Imperialists were victorious.

Amar Singh and Tara Singh fell back and shut themselves up in the fort, which was besieged by the Imperial forces. Severe fighting took place on the 8th and 9th October. The Prince advised the Minister to deliver an immediate assault but the timid Nawab had no heart to do so. His failure to take the fort immediately turned the table on him. Mutinies broke out in the army from the enmity between the Mughals and the Afghans, the latter being instigated by Zabita Khan. Ghazi Khan and Alam Khan etc. refused to fight as there was no money to pay them. Even Himmat Khan on whom the Nawab had showered innumerable favours, revolted.

A little earlier Amar Singh had invited the Majha Sikhs to his aid. They, under the leadership of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, at once responded to the call. According to the author of *Jassa Singh Binod* (page 230), "When Jassa Singh Ahluwalia got the news, he

1. *Akhbarat*, pp. 252 a-b.

immediately wrote to the Sikh Sardars that they should not delay any longer as Abdul Ahad had marched from Delhi into their country. Jai Singh, Hakikat Singh, Tirlak Singh, Amar Singh Bagha, Amar Singh Kangra and other Kanhiya Sardars came to Batala and the camp was fixed at Achal. Ramgarhias fought with them and two of their places were taken. Then they came to Sathiala and marching stage by stage crossed the Sutlej, at Talwan-ka-Patan. Here they were joined by Sada Singh, Tara Singh Kakar, Mohan Singh Nishanwalia and his brother Anup Singh.<sup>11</sup>

The news of the progress of the Dal Khalsa caused large scale desertions of the Sikhs from the Imperialist's army. Panic spread in the ranks of the Mughals and they decided to return to Delhi. The retreat was, according to Frankline, disgraceful and disorderly, and in four days' march from Patiala to Panipat the Mughal army lost most of its equipment and a great many men.

The road to Delhi was rolled out for the Sikhs like the proverbial red carpet. It needed one bold chieftain to lead his horsemen into the Imperial city, take the Emperor under his protection, and with one stroke make the Sikhs the premier power in all Hindustan. But not one of the Malwai Sardars had the sagacity or the courage to take this step. They were little more than brigades to whom the victory at Patiala opened up new pastures to plunder.

### **Shafi's Campaign in the Doab Against the Sikhs**

The Sikhs, instead of capturing the capital which lay within easy reach, by-passed it and went across the Jamuna to loot the Jamuna-Gangetic Doab.

In the meanwhile, the Emperor issued urgent orders to Najaf Khan, the only general capable of stemming the tide of the Sikhs to come to Delhi. Abdul Ahad Khan who did not relish that the prestige of Najaf Khan should increase at the court of the Emperor got the order rescinded, but Najaf Khan who was only too much away from Delhi upto this time, continued his advance till he reached Delhi and his men occupied key positions in the capital. Abdul Ahad Khan was ousted in spite of Emperor's best efforts to save his favourite. Najaf Khan afterwards offered a large tribute to the Emperor who appointed him to the supreme command of all the departments of the State.

1. Dr. H.R. Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. II, p. 91.  
*Jassa Singh Binod*, p. 220.

After consolidating his position, he attended to the lawless activities of the Sikhs which he, being a good administrator, was determined to put an end to. He appointed his grand-nephew, Mirza Shafi, in charge of regular campaign against the Sikhs in the Upper Doab in January, 1780. He was provided with a select force of 10000 and a strong park of artillery. Shafi set himself to the task. He set up his headquarter at Meerut; and from this place, led many expeditions against the Sikhs. They withdrew before him, not going very far from his camp and by their guerilla tactics gave him a hard time.

During Shafi's campaign in the Doab, the behaviour of the Sikh chiefs was strange and sometimes unaccountable. The Sikh chiefs and Sikh Rajas began to court the Wazir (Najaf Khan) to gain the favour of the Imperial court by holding hopes of their support against their co-religionists. Vakils of Jassa Singh of Kapurthala, Raja Amar Singh of Patiala and Raja of Jind attended the court to woo the Wazir. Some Sikh Chiefs waited on Najaf Khan and offered their services to fight in the Imperial army against the Sikh invaders of the Doab. Several reasons can be ascribed to such a behaviour of the Sikhs. Firstly, some Sikh chiefs wanted to have first hand knowledge of the weak points of the Mughal army. Secondly, some wished to retain the favour of the Wazir and the General to secure favourable terms in case of the defeat of their brethren. Lastly, some others might have been goaded by jealousy.

Shafi was, however, instructed to recruit Sikh Chiefs each on a salary of Rs. 100 per month and a Sikh trooper at the rate of twelve annas per day.

The cis-Sutlej chiefs, at this time, were embroiled in internecine warfare. Karam Singh Nirmala, Desu Singh, Jassa Singh, Sahib Singh, Sucha Singh and Gurbakhsh Singh were against Raja Amar Singh of Patiala. Similarly Bhag Singh, Bhangra Singh, Sahib Singh of Khondah had joined Diwan Singh against Baghel Singh, Sada Singh, Dulcha Singh and Karam Singh Nirmala. Skirmishes were going on between the parties. Similarly on the 20th October, 1780 it was reported to Delhi that Amar Singh and Gajpat Singh were not on good terms and Diwan Singh and Rai Singh were plundering their country. Occasionally some party would contact the Imperial general for help on promise of rendering help to the Imperialists, as, for example, Diwan Singh and Sahib Singh sought help from Najaf Khan requesting him to send Zabita Khan and promising to him in return to help the Wazir whenever he would



require their services.

In spite of the civil strife the Sikhs continued ravaging the upper Doab. Gurdit Singh along with his 200 horse-men crossed Jamuna and laid waste four villages of Zabita Khan (21st September, 1780). On the 11th October, 1780, a Sikh force of about 4000 horse crossed the Ganges into the Najibabad and Bijnor districts and drove away cattle from several villages.

To meet the menace of the Sikhs successfully, Shafi made urgent request to Najaf Khan to direct Zabita Khan to assist him in his war with the Sikhs. Najaf Khan readily acceded to his request and asked Zabita Khan to help Shafi Khan.

Zabita Khan proceeded to Tanda where Shafi Khan was to meet him to discuss the plans of action. Zabita Khan opened negotiations with the Sikhs to prevail upon them to respect the Mughal power but he could achieve only a partial success.

In the meantime, the internecine fighting among the Sikhs started with fury. Some of the Sikh chiefs asked Zabita Khan to help them. At this juncture Shafi Khan consulted Zabita Khan to conduct himself in such a way that the discord among them grew acute. His exact words were "set one party against the other.... put them all to fight among themselves." The Ruhilla succeeded in this task. The Sikh chiefs fell out among themselves. About the end of November 1780 Shafi Khan and Zabita Khan crossed the Jamuna and took up their position at Kunjpura. Gajpat Singh of Jind the most loyal chief in the cis-Sutlej territory waited upon them. Shafi imprisoned him along with three other chiefs. Zabita Khan protested against this unfair treatment meted to the loyal chiefs, and finding Shafi Khan paying no heed to his view-point, left for Delhi.

Shafi, single-handed, maintained his ground at Kunjpura for two months. Early in February 1781, the Sikhs entered the Doab and spelled destruction on a large scale. The pargana of Manglam was their special target. Shafi made haste to reach Saharanpur. A fierce battle was fought between him and the Sikhs. Shafi's well-directed artillery and disciplined sepoy musketeers proved more than a match for their formidable adversaries. The famous leader Sahib Singh Khondah was slain. The Sikhs fled to their homes. Shafi pursued them so closely that while crossing the Jamuna many Sikhs were drowned in the river.<sup>1</sup>

---

1. Sarkar, J.N., *Fall of the Mughals*, Vol. III, pp. 215-16.

Mirza Shafi followed up his success by carrying the war into the Sikh homeland. He proceeded up to the Grand Trunk Road and took Buriya, Mustafabad and Sadhaura. The Sikhs harassed Mughal forces throughout their advance. They hovered around them and did not allow them peace. The engagements during the advance were invariably attacked by the Sikhs although they were not allowed to gain success.

On the 17th March, 1781, Raja Amar Singh offered his assistance against the Sikhs to the Imperial General and to this effect, he sent his Vakil, named Chain Singh. Mirza Shafi Khan told the Vakil to ask his Raja to send both money and reinforcement.

The Sikhs, however, did not allow Patiala troops to join Shafi Khan. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia invaded the Patiala territory while Tara Singh Ghaiba and Karam Singh intercepted the progress of Amar Singh's contingent and other Sikhs blocked their way at Ambala. The Raja was obliged to recall them. Jassa Singh and other Sikhs, however, continued to plunder Patiala territory. The Vakil of Raja Amar Singh offered them money, and in consequence they retired towards Malerkotla and later to Khanna where Amar Singh went to Jassa Singh and settled terms for peace.

After this event Shafi Khan could achieve nothing except a small victory in an engagement at Indri (April 1781). He could not prevent them from going behind him and raiding the Gangetic Doab within a few weeks, liberating most of the towns he had captured on April 16, 1781. The Sikhs, plundered Shahdara and Partap Ganj.

Mirza Shafi's expedition into Malwa was an expensive failure and had to be given up by the middle of the year. Zabita Khan was entrusted the task of settling the terms with the Sikhs. Zabita Khan assisted by Gajpat Singh interviewed the Sikh Chiefs and persuaded them to come to an agreement with the Delhi Government. "The terms of this pact were that the Sikhs would not raid the Imperial territory any more, but serve in Delhi army for pay when called upon in return for their being now formally confined in the possession of their estates roughly the region of north of Panipat and granted the right of levying blackmail, called Rakhī (about two annas for every rupee the standard land revenue due to the state) in the region from Panipat to the walls of Delhi and the upper Doab.<sup>1</sup>

---

1. British Museum, Persian Akhbarat, as quoted by Dr. H.R. Gupta.

This settlement was significant in the history of the Punjab. The Mughal Emperor of India formally accepted the sovereign rights of the Sikhs over the country situated to the west of the Jamuna and recognised their right of realising 'Rakhi' in the upper Gangetic Doab. This being so, the sway of the Sikhs became *de jure* as well as *de facto*. According to Dr. H.R. Gupta, "This recognition by the highest authority in the realm was a very remarkable achievement of the Sikhs. If they had not been the unfortunate victim of dis-unity, dissonance and dissensions, there was every likelihood that the Sikhs would have superseded the Marathas in supremacy over Northern India."

The peace between the Sikhs and Delhi government lasted for a short time. Each side was suspicious of the other. Najaf Khan died in April 1782. The struggle for power that ensued gave the Sikhs another chance to become the sovereign power of Hindustan. And yet again they let the chance slip through their fingers.

They re-appeared in the neighbourhood of Delhi and, instead of capturing it plundered its environs and laid waste the country upto Khurja. Some of the Sikhs under Baghel Singh having ravaged the Gangetic Doab, contemplated to cross the river into Ruhilkhand. At this juncture, the forces of the Nawab of Oudh and some English Battalions under Colonel Kundson also arrived on the scene. As a consequence upon it, the Sikhs gave up their intention and concentrated their attention on the Doab. "Being at the time in Ruhilkhand," wrote Forster, "I witnessed the terror and general alarm which prevailed among the inhabitants who, deserting the open country, had retired into forts and places inaccessible to cavalry." By this time, the Sikhs had become supreme not only in the Punjab and the Gangetic Doab but also in the lower hill country upto the banks of the Ganges. The Raja of Garhwal being unable to restrain the inroads of the Sikhs had bought them off by the payment of an annual tribute of Rs. 4000. Similarly, the ruler of Nahan and other neighbouring states submitted to the Sikhs and agreed to pay annual tribute to them.

The main body of the Sikhs having plundered Aligarh and Buland Shahar proceeded towards Delhi. They lay encamped near Barari Ghat on the Jamuna. From this place they attacked Malka Ganj and Sabzi Mandi which they set on fire. Many people were killed at Mughalpur. Prince Mirza Shikoh tried to check them near Qila Mahtabpur, but he suffered a defeat and fled away. The Sikhs

broke through Ajmeri Gate and plundered Hauz Qazi. The Sikhs attacked the fort and entered it on 11th March. In the Diwan Hall, they placed Jassa Singh Ahluwalia on the throne and called him Badshah Singh. Jassa Singh challenged him. Jassa Singh declined the honour and withdrew. There was no capable man in Delhi to oppose the Sikhs. The Emperor sent urgent message to Mirza Shafi and his brother, Zain-ul-Abidin to come to relieve the capital of the Sikh menace.

Zain-ul-Abidin reached Delhi on the 13th March and Shafi arrived at the capital on the 15th March 1783, but before their arrival peaceful settlement had been arrived at between the Sikhs and the Delhi Court. The main body of the Sikhs, therefore, had retired from Delhi on the 12th March, 1783. As per settlement, the Sikhs received a cash present of three lakhs of rupees while Baghel Singh remained behind at the head of 4000 Sikh troops to build Gurdwaras. Baghel Singh established his camp in Sabzi Mandi and addressed himself to the task of constructing the Gurdwaras in sacred memory of the Gurus, who had visited the city. One was built at the place of the execution of the ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur, in Chandni Chowk, the city's busiest thoroughfare; one to mark the site of the cremation of the Guru's body now known as Gurdwara Rakab Ganj, a third at Guru Hari Krishan's place of residence<sup>1</sup>, and a fourth at the place where the infant Guru and the wives of Guru Gobind Singh were cremated.<sup>2</sup> He also built a Gurdwara in Teliwara in memory of Mother Sundri and Mother Sahib Kaur. Two more Gurdwaras were built; one at Majnu Ka Tilla, where Guru Nanak and Mardana and Guru Hargobind Sahib had stayed for some time. These Gurdwaras were endowed liberally by grants of a number of villages to every one of them.

In the summer of 1783 Sikh incursions across the Jamuna assumed the magnitude of an exodus. After two poor harvests, the Monsoon failed completely, and the whole of India from Multan to Bengal was gripped by famine. Like the rest of India, the country in the south-eastern Punjab lay in ruins. Small villages were completely deserted and people took refuge in large villages. Starvation left no strength in them. Some died helplessly in their villages, others fell exhausted on the way.

1. This Gurdwara is now known as Gurdwara Bangla Sahib.

2. This Gurdwara bears the name of Gurdwara Bala Sahib.

Hard-pressed by the famine a large body of the Sikhs about 15,000 horse and 20,000 foot, along with their families, retired from the cis-Sutlej territory to the upper Gangetic Doab. No Mughal could muster courage to check their advance in the Gangetic Doab, although the Emperor repeatedly asked them to undertake the project of punishing the Sikhs. Afrasiyab Khan refused to pursue the Sikhs on the ground that his troops were clamouring for the arrears of their pay, and were not prepared to undertake any expedition without money. Similarly, Mirza Zain-ul-Abidin expressed his inability to undertake expedition against the Sikhs owing to the paucity of funds.

Meanwhile, Delhi politics grew favourable to the Sikhs. Among the four lieutenants of Najaf Khan—Afrasiyab Khan, Najaf Kuli Khan, Mirza Shafi and Muhammad Beg Hamdani—Shafi was the most capable general and straight-forward and open-hearted fellow, Afrasiyab a useless fellow having no military talent or skill, Najaf Kuli a man taken to wine and woman and Hamdani excelling all in treachery, intrigue and diplomacy. Afrasiyab succeeded Najaf Khan in the offices of Regent and Mir Bakhshi, but he was deprived of it shortly. Shafi succeeded Afrasiyab. Shortly after, on the 23rd September 1783, Shafi fell a victim to the intrigues of Afrasiyab and Hamdani and was murdered by them. Afrasiyab again became Regent. Zain-ul-Abidin Khan, the elder brother of Mirza Shafi, burned with the desire of taking the revenge of the murder of his brother. An insult was added to injury when his estate of eleven Mahals, in the district of Meerut was transferred to his son-in-law, Ahad Khan.

The Sikhs were quick enough to take advantage of the dissensions in the Mughal court. They found a ready ally in Zain-ul-Abidin who encouraged them to plunder the crown-lands in Panipat, Sonapat and Delhi districts in October 1783.

Accordingly, the Sikhs led many raids into the Doab territory. They did not enter the territory of Nawab of Oudh simply for the regard for the British Government. Brown in this context in his letter to Warren Hastings seems to convey that if the Sikhs had not entered the territory of the Nawab of Oudh, it was not because of their regard for the British Government but it was because of their calculated move to win over neutrality in their project of conquering "the country possessed by the Musalmans."

The Delhi Government in order to check the aggression of the Sikhs tried to put their house in order. Afrasiyab, at the instance



of the Emperor, conciliated Zain-ul-Abidin. Dr. H.R. Gupta says, "Afrasiyab tried to conciliate Zain-ul-Abidin. He deputed the Diwan of Jan Ali Khan, on behalf of Khadijah Begam, the renowned sister of the late Najaf Khan, then in camp with him. The Diwan succeeded in prevailing upon Zain-ul-Abidin to come to a meeting with Afrasiyab Khan under the protection of the forces of neutral Begam Samru on the 23rd December. At the conference Khadijah Begam and Najaf Kuli Khan were also present. Zain-ul-Abidin visited Khadijah Begam in her tent where Afrasiyab presented him a *Khilat*, a sword, and an elephant. Zain-ul-Abidin was next presented to the Prince to whom the former complained about his *Jagir* of eleven *Mahals*."

Afrasiyab stated that the territory in question was a part of the crown-lands and the decision of the problem was left to the Emperor. The regent held out hopes of a favourable consideration. In case he could not do anything in getting back eleven 'Mahals' for him, he promised him another *Jagir* to the value of twenty-four thousand rupees. It was agreed that the three generals—Afrasiyab, Najaf Quli and Zain-ul-Abidin should work in concert against Gulab Gujar of Puri Chatgarh, Chatra Jat and the Sikhs. Zabita took upon himself to keep the Sikhs out of Doab and prevent them from raiding the Delhi district.

The Delhi Government was however, entertaining false hopes because no one among the Mughals was capable of checking the Sikh aggression. In January 1784, over thirty thousand horsemen under the leadership of Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and Karam Singh forded the Jamuna and began to collect 'Rakhi' from the towns and villages between two rivers.

These Sardars who showed so much pluck and courage in the battlefield displayed surprising timidity in the political field. When sounded by the Emperor, they shrank from taking the Imperial city under their protection. In this instance, the Emperor turned for help to the English and the Marathas. The English refused to shoulder the responsibility of the protection of the Empire because they did not have the confidence that they would be permitted by the Court of Directors in London to extend the British Power beyond the Ganges. The best that the Governor-General, Warren Hastings, could do was to preserve the status quo and try to keep the Sikhs and the Marathas apart without committing his government in any way.

By the winter of 1784, Shah Alam II concluded that the



English and the Sikhs were not willing to take over the administration. He, therefore, turned to the Marathas who had earlier brought him back to the capital. In December, he invested Mahadji Sindhia with the title of Vakil-i-Mutlaq and requested him to take care of whatever remained of the Empire.

Even the appointment of Mahadji Sindhia as Vakil-i-Mutlaq could not deter the Sikhs from carrying roads into the Doab. In the beginning of 1785, a large horde of them numbering about 30000 under the leadership of Baghel Singh, Gurdit Singh and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia crossed the Jamuna and swept over the Doab with fury and ferocity. They razed to the ground the Barha Sayyed towns which lay right on their line of march. Miranpur was signalized for a victim of their wrath. Chandausi and Muradabad were plundered. The Ruhillas, led by Ghulam Qadir, who had succeeded his father, Zabita Khan, the English, and the Nawab Wazir of Oudh lined their troops along the river to prevent the Sikhs from crossing over. As a consequence of it, the Sikhs did not cross the river and diverted their attention to plunder the crown-lands in the regions of Panipat, Sonapat and Delhi.

Mahadji Sindhia ordered his troops to expel the Sikhs. After the first skirmish, he concluded that he would get better results by conciliating the Sikhs than by fighting. Negotiations were opened by the Marathas with the Sikh chiefs and terms of a provisional treaty agreed on in March 1785. Both the parties were playing their own games. The Marathas entered into the treaty with the Sikhs simply to gain time to consolidate the Mughal hold in the Doab and other places; they intended to deal with the Sikhs afterwards. The Sikhs, on their part, had their own aim; they wanted a free hand to deal with the Nawab of Oudh, who was also disliked by the Marathas. In the definitive treaty concluded between the Sikhs and the Marathas, the clauses in the provisional treaty which gave some freedom to the Sikhs to have free play of their will in the territory of Oudh were dropped by Mahadji Sindhia, obviously under the pressure of the British. The Sikhs were chagrined at it, although their leaders were made to put their signatures on the treaty under duress. The treaty was, in no way, expressive of the desire of the Marathas as well as of the Sikhs to establish joint rule on all-India basis.

The Sikhs, finding the treaty absolutely useless from their point of view, snapped their relations with the Marathas forthwith and within a few weeks, it was forgotten by both sides.

At this juncture, the Sikh chiefs concluded that the English wanted to treat with them and made proposal for an alliance. But the English were not prepared to pick up quarrel with the Marathas till they were very sure that they were inimical to them.

The Sikhs, however, renewed their marauding activities. Early in June 1785, the Sikhs entered the Doab and began to collect *Rakhi* at the rate of two annas in the rupee of revenue. Dhar Rao, one of the Sindhia's generals proceeded to Meerut to expel the Sikhs but he did not achieve much success. Early in July 1785, Dhar Rao Sindhia marched at the head of 10000 troops to overawe the Sikhs into submission. On the way, he was joined by Raja Gajpat Singh with whose active assistance he realized some tribute from the local Sikh chiefs. At Kunjpura Baghel Singh and Karam Singh met him. In consequence of Dhar Rao's demand Ghulam Qadir Ruhilla immediately paid one lakh of rupees out of the tribute due from him. About 1500 Sikhs who were still carrying on their depredations in the Meerut district were greatly alarmed at finding the Maratha General lying encamped in their rear, and they soon crossed back into their territory.

In August 1785, Gurdit Singh Ladwa entered the Doab with 1000 horse and plundered the Meerut district, but he returned shortly afterwards.

In November, 1785, Mahadji approached towards the Imperial capital to protect it from the Sikhs, as their troops were not actually opposed to his.<sup>1</sup>

Early in 1786, the Marathas got a very welcome opportunity of interfering in Sikh affairs. One of the Maratha officers, Dhar Rao, was stationed in the Panipat region. Nanu Mal, Diwan of Patiala, hard-pressed by rebel chiefs, approached him for help and promised to pay 5000 rupees a day, 3 lakhs in cash and all the expenses.<sup>2</sup> The presence of the Maratha chief with his army enabled Nanu Mal to re-establish his position and he took the earliest opportunities of paying off the stipulated sum to the Marathas and persuading him to withdraw. But Sikh predatory inroads into the upper Doab continued, their levy of '*Rakhi*' extending upto Meerut.<sup>3</sup>

In January 1786, when Dhar Rao was busy in assisting Patiala Raja, Bhanga Singh, Karam Singh and other Sikh chiefs with 5000

---

1. Imperial Records Secret Proceeding, 11th Oct., 1785.

2. Delhi Yethil, 160.

3. Delhi Yethil I, 168.

horse crossed the Jamuna and plundered a few villages near Ghausgarh. Then they ravaged Meerut, Hapur and Garh Muktesar. To expel the Sikhs from the Doab Ravloji Sindhia reached Hapur at the head of nearly 7000 cavalry, with ten pieces of cannon. The Sikhs marched back towards the Jamuna. Ravloji pursued them as far as Kairana. The Sikhs crossed the river into their own territory but a body of them under Karam Singh managed to escape towards Ghausgarh and committed ravages. Bapuji Malhar and Devji Garle with a force of 3000 were sent after them. As the Sikhs and Gujjars were acting in concert, the Marathas refrained from fighting. To drive away the Sikhs from the Delhi district, Ganpat Rao Krishan came from Meerut to Baghpat, while Shah Nizam-ud-din reached Delhi. Ganpat Rao was joined by Haibat Rao Phalke but the Dallewalia Sikh Sardars, with a body of 4000 horse were ready to oppose them. Shyam Rao Appaji at the head of two regiments of infantry and 500 cavalry with Ghulam Qadir as his assistant was sent to Panipat to guard the Imperial frontier. The Sikhs afraid of being intercepted in the rear returned home before Appaji and Ghulam Qadir could reach Karnal district.

In February 1787, Ghulam Qadir was on his way to Delhi to seek assistance from Sindhia in case of an attack of the Sikhs but chiefly to comply with their chief's previous orders for his presence in the capital.<sup>1</sup> The Sikhs took advantage of his absence and proceeded towards Ghausgarh to coerce Ghulam Qadir to make payment of the amount of 'Rakhi' which came about a lakh of rupees, which his father Zabita had agreed to pay. Ghulam Qadir found safety only adjusting his differences with them. Consequently he paid to some chiefs their share of 'Rakhi' and they stopped their hostilities; but others whose claims were not satisfied continued to fight.

Now (Feb. 1787), Sindhia asked Ambaji to proceed towards Panipat to stop the Sikhs from making inroads into the Doab as also to deter them from attacking crown-lands. Ambaji left Delhi. He was joined by Baghel Singh with 1000 troops. He wanted to take other chiefs like Karam Singh and Gurdit Singh into his service. He offered six annas a day per horseman (sowar), but they demanded Jagir, as had been given to Baghel Singh. These negotiations proved abortive; Ghulam Qadir, however, joined him.

---

1. The Sikh Vakil at Lucknow told Forster that Ghulam Qadir himself had planned the Sikh incursion in order to avoid going to Sindhia. P.R.C., i, 97.

As Ambaji was resorting to negotiations with Sikhs, some of their chiefs started lawless activities in all directions. One of their bands approached the western bank of the Ganges opposite Daranagar early in March. They fired upon a detachment of the Nawab of Oudh stationed there and wounded some sepoy. But owing to their insufficient strength, they did not attempt forcing a passage across the river. This step was probably taken by the Sikhs to coerce the English to join them against the Marathas. The Sikh turned back and got busy in laying waste Ghulam Qadir's possession.

Ambaji's expedition, however, failed. Ghulam Qadir suddenly retired. A sum of 20,000 rupees from Nanumal was what chiefly induced him to quit so abruptly. Ambaji still talked of advancing further into the Sikh country. But he knew that there was a Jaipur agent, well provided with money who was attempting to seduce his Sikh allies. Under the circumstances he decided to retire to Delhi. He was accompanied in his return journey by Baghel Singh and other Sikh Sardars who had joined him at Panipat, except Rai Singh who had gone away with Ghulam Qadir. In such circumstances the retreating army would almost invariably have been plundered. But in this case, the Sikhs contented themselves with carrying off two hundred heads of cattle and sometimes robbing his camp in the night.<sup>1</sup>

Sindhia's defeat at Jaipur encouraged Ghulam Qadir to conduct himself independently. He contacted Baghel Singh and other Sikh Chiefs to join him in his attack on the imperial territory. Some Sikh chiefs accepted the offer and marched towards the Imperial capital.<sup>1</sup> On the 23rd July they attacked Shahdara. On the 26th July a body of about 500 Sikhs plundered the country between Delhi and Agra.

On the 27th July a definitive agreement was reached between the Sikh chiefs and Ghulam Qadir according to which the Ruhilla Chief agreed to return the property of the Sikhs which he had previously plundered. After this, the Sikhs and Ghulam Qadir jointly advanced upon Delhi in August-September, 1787. They defeated the Imperial guard on 23rd August. When Madho Rao Phalke, the Maratha chieftain advanced to oppose them, he suffered a heavy loss. Phalke saved his men by shutting himself up in the fort of Shahdara. Sindhia's son-in-law Ladoji Shitola Deshmukh also fled away from Delhi at 10.00 o'clock in the night

1. Delhi Yethil, 6th July, 1787.

of 23rd August at the head of 500 Marathas. Another agent of Sindhia Nizam-ud-din also considered it advisable to follow the example of Deshmukh.

Ghulam Qadir entered Delhi on the 5th September. The Emperor found it impossible to resist and he conferred upon him the office of Mir Bakhshi with the title of Amir-ul-Umra. From hard drinking, his eyes were inflamed and he was in an un-controllable mood. The trembling emperor invested him with the robes, appointed him the regent and ordered rescripts to be issued for granting him Jagirs corresponding to his rank and office and also for placing the control of the crown-lands in his hands.

Three days after i.e. on September 8, 1787, the battalions of Begam Samru Bakhshi Syam and Baghel Singh (who had been won over by Begam Samru) reached Delhi.<sup>1</sup> Ghulam Qadir tried to win over Begam Samru and Baghel Singh. Begam rejected the proposal. Baghel Singh, however, agreed to change his side.

Ghulam Qadir finding his position precarious returned to Aligarh where he rallied round himself more Sikh chieftains. The Emperor also tried to enlist the help of the Sikh chieftains, but he could win over only one Sikh chieftain namely Banga Singh of Thanesar.

Ghulam Qadir and his Sikh allies returned to Delhi early in October, 1787. They stormed the Red fort from the eastern bank of the Jamuna on the 7th October, 1787. On the 30th October, twelve large balls fell in the palace and killed a child in the courtyard of Diwan-i-Am. The Emperor was terrified. He out of despair invited his son, Jahandar Shah to help. He did come, but not to assist him, rather to confine him and to declare that he was the Emperor. Emperor could not expect any help from Sindhia because he was hard-pressed by Ghulam Qadir and had lost his control over most of the territories in Indo-Gangetic Doab. He willy nilly considered it politic to pardon Ghulam Qadir for his outrage on the palace and confirmed him in the high posts already conferred upon him.

The Sikhs in the meanwhile shifted their allegiance to Najab Quli Khan who had usurped the district of Rewari and now wanted to safeguard his territory from Mughal forces at the centre. He employed a body of Sikhs and led them to attack Delhi. Emperor Shah Alam assisted by Begam Samru did put up resistance but the

---

1. *Delhi Chronicle*, 282-283; Sarkar J.N., *Decline and Fall of Mughal Empire - III*, 434.



Mughal soldiers were no match for the daughty Sikhs. The Sikhs slaughtered most of them and then advanced to the Emperor's tent. The Emperor saved himself by taking shelter with Begam Samru's European troops. Shah Alam, as advised by Begam Samru, conciliated Najaf Quli Khan by confirming him in his estates.

When there was all disorder at Delhi, Sindhia facing reverses, Ghulam Qadir engaged in his own problems, the Sikhs did not lose the opportunity and ransacked the Doab several times from February to June at the time of harvest. They ravaged the territory of Ghulam Qadir including Ambehta, Ghausgarh and Meerut. Ghulam Qadir was at this time waging war against a body of the Marathas and Jats near Bharatpur, and had won a victory over the allied troops. He immediately hurried back to repel the Sikhs. He encountered his old friends near Meerut and drove them out of Doab. Gurdit Singh and Karam Singh Nirmala deserted him, though many Sikhs still remained with the Ruhilla chieftains. They returned to Thanesar. They decided to attack Delhi and realise Rakhi from the Doab after the rains.

Ghulam Qadir Khan crossed the river on July 14 and received audience from the Emperor on the 16th July. On the 10th August, 1788 Ghulam Qadir sat on the throne and summoned the Emperor before him. He ordered the Emperor to disclose his secret treasures. The Emperor pleaded poverty. Ghulam Qadir at once leaped from the throne, felled Shah Alam, mounted on his breast and took out his eyes with a sharp-pointed dagger. At this time, he ordered a court painter to draw his profile depicting his action.

The occupation of Delhi by Ghulam Qadir was a challenge to Sindhia who once acted as the regent of the Empire. He despatched to Delhi his trusted general Rane Khan at the head of a large force on September 14, 1788. Jiva Dada Bakhshi was also sent to assist him in his mission on 26th September 1788. Both of them occupied Delhi on October 2, 1788. They were joined by Begam Samru. Ghulam Qadir had to cross the river Jamuna in the darkness of night. The treasure convoy was plundered on his way to Ghausgarh by the Marathas, Sikhs and Gujjars. Ghulam Qadir could not hold Ghausgarh. Then he moved to Aligarh to find that his Qiladar had submitted to the Marathas on the 20th October. Ultimately, he took shelter in the fort of Meerut on November 4, 1788. The Marathas immediately besieged it and compelled Ghulam Qadir to escape. According to Sardesai, "driven from post to pillar, he sought refuge in the house of a Brahmin of village



Bahnauli (5 km south of Shamli). He was betrayed and captured by Rane Khan on the 19th December, 1788. He was sent to Sindhia at Mathura on the 31st December, 1788 and was put to death on the 4th March, 1789. Ghulam Qadir's body was gradually cut to pieces. His head was sent to Delhi to the blind Emperor, while his body was hung upon a tree."

It is believed that while evacuating Meerut, he had the mind to withdraw to the Sikh country.

Now that Sindhia's position was quite secure, he felt it incumbent to stop the almost periodic incursions of the Sikhs into the Ganges-Jamuna Doab as also their frequent plundering raids carried upto the very walls of Delhi.

Soon the opportunity offered itself. Patiala was attacked by some Sikh chiefs of the neighbourhood. The Patiala Government felt its inability to repel the invasion without external aid. Rane Khan, the famous Maratha general was in the Doab. Nanumal, the chief minister of Patiala, invited his assistance. Rane Khan crossed the Jamuna and proceeded towards Patiala. On the way, Kaithal chiefs offered gifts as a token of having submitted to him. Bhanga Singh and his brother Bhag Singh frequently attacked his baggage.

Meanwhile, the Patiala Government felt relieved of the hovering danger of attack from the rival chiefs of the neighbourhood. Nanumal, the Diwan of the state, now had no use of the Maratha general. He wished him to go back; but he refused to do so without getting the reward in terms of huge sum. As the Diwan could not arrange, the Maratha troops lay waste the Patiala territory.

Rani Rajinder, a daughter of the son of Ala Singh could not tolerate the ruin of her subjects resulting from this warfare. At the head of military guard, she left Patiala and came to Suhlar (2 miles from Patiala) where Rane Khan was halting. She induced the Maratha general to retire promising to pay the tribute after personally settling the amount of it with Mahadji Sindhia who was encamped at Mathura. She actually went to Mathura where the Patel received her with great honour, and a *nazrana* of one lakh was promised and paid. Not long after this, Nanumal and Rani Rajinder died.

Though the Sikhs were checked but their predatory activities did not stop.

No sooner had Rane Khan turned his back upon the Sikh territory than a strong Sikh force under the leadership of Karam Singh Nirmala gathered on the western bank of the Jamuna. About

the middle of December 1790, they crossed the river Jamuna and spread all over the upper Gangetic Doab in small bodies. Mahadji Sindhia passed orders to his Generals, Bhairon Tantiya, Devji Gavle and Babuji Malhar to deal with the Sikhs; but before they could march upon them, the Sikhs quietly crossed over the Jamuna into their own territory.

Devji Gavle proposed a Jagir for Karam Singh Nirmala to put a stop to the incursions of the Sikhs but nothing came out of this proposal.

Towards the end of 1790, a band of three hundred Sikhs attacked Jalauli in Aligarh district. At this place an Englishman named Longcroft, an indigo planter lived in a castle. He was the main target of the Sikhs. But because of the Sikh opposition of the villagers and sudden murder of their leader in the affray, they left the place.

In 1791, Bhanga Singh of Thanesar captured an English officer at Anup Shahr and released him in October, 1791 after realizing a ransom of Rs. 60,000 from his government.

Early in 1792, a body of 5,000 Sikhs made preparations to raid the upper Gangetic Doab. A batch of two thousand of them crossed the Jamuna first and got busy in their predatory deeds. The others soon followed suit. Devji Gavle stationed in the Doab, immediately repaired to Mathura and waited on Gopal Rao Raghunath. He immediately sent reinforcement to Sadashiv Malhar, the Maratha Amil of Ghausgarh. He himself also started from Mathura. But all this move did not have any effect on the Sikhs who extended their depredations to the very gates of Delhi. After the Sikhs left the Doab in March 1792, Ravloji Sindhia and Madho Rao Phalke were appointed in the Doab to keep themselves ready to oppose any future inroads of the Sikhs.<sup>1</sup>

Nothing is known about Sikh activities for nearly a year and a half; but early in October 1793, a body of the Sikhs crossed the Jamuna and created disturbances in the country. At this time Devji Gavle and Babuji Malhar were posted at Saharanpur. On the 6th October, 1793, the Maratha Commanders attacked the Sikh camp in the night, wounded and killed about fifty men and seized one hundred horses. The Sikhs thereupon retired across the river towards Patiala in order to gather in large numbers to renew the attack.

1. Delhi Yethil, ii, 41.

Imperial Record Political Proceedings, 8th February, 1792, No. 20.

Another body of the Sikhs was ravaging the Delhi province. Khande Rao Hari was despatched to expel them; and he easily succeeded in his object.

On the 12th February, 1794 Mahadji Sindhia died and the incursions became more extensive than before.

At the time of Sindhia's death, the Maratha forces in the Delhi province and the Doab were distributed at several places. Bhairon Pant Tantiya was at Panipat, Bapuji Malhar and Devji Gavle at Saharanpur, Jivaji Balal and Ambaji Ingle at Sambhal and Appa Khande Rao Hari who had just employed George Thomas in her service. There was a keen jealousy and rivalry between Devji Gavle and Bapuji Malhar. Shah Nizam-ud-Din, Sindhia's agent, and Appa Khande Rao Hari who were incharge of Delhi province were not on good terms. Bhairon Pant and Bapuji Malhar were also stricken with jealousy for each other. Similarly Devji Gavle was also jealous of Bhairon Pant.

All this encouraged the Sikhs greatly and a body of them consisting of 4000 horse immediately crossed the Jamuna to seize Saharanpur district. But just at this time, Baghel Singh, the famous Sikh chief of the cis-Sutlej country fell it. Besides Begam Samrut on hearing of the difficulties of Bhairon Pant marched to his rescue. The Sikhs were not prepared to face the well-disciplined artillery regiment of the Begam. Consequently, after ravaging some parts of the district they retired to their own territory.<sup>1</sup>

In October 1794, the Sikhs offered their services to Ghulam Muhammad of Rampur and sent a letter through their agent Manik Chand. The letter was signed by Jassa Singh Ramgarhia. Ghulam Muhammad did enlist their aid. According to Dr. H.R. Gupta, "Ten thousand Sikhs served him and fought at his bidding in the battle against Nawab Wazir of Oudh." After a desperate fight, Ghulam Muhammad surrendered.

In June 1795, a large body of the Sikhs entered the Doab led by Jai Singh, Tara Singh and Baghel Singh.

Shortly after their return from the Doab the Sikhs were called upon to deal with Maratha Chief named Nana Rao who was sent across the Jamuna to subdue the Sikh country and to secure Nazrana. The chiefs of Jind and Kaithal sent presents. But Sahib Kaur, sister of the Raja of Patiala, who directed the affairs of state

---

1. PRC, i, 206, p. 315.

Delhi Yethil, ii, 4, 86, 87, 109, 115, 120, 131, 133.

there, would not willingly agree to such a tame submission. She succeeded in securing the aid of Bhanga Singh and Mehtab Singh of Thanesar and other Phulkian chiefs. Tara Singh Ghaiba also sent a detachment. She herself had about 5,000 Sowars with her. A battle was fought at Mardanpur. It continued upto sunset. It was the personal bravery of Rani Sahib Kaur that presented retreat of the Sikh army. In the Maratha camp utmost confusion prevailed. Alarming rumours reached them that the Sikhs were coming in hordes from across the Sutlej. Nana Rao retired towards Karnal with his army of 12000. The Decanee army might have been overwhelmed but for the arrival of Madho Rao with reinforcements. They could now compel the Sikhs to withdraw. Fighting continued even on the second day until both parties were exhausted. The Sikhs, however, continued their hovering and harassing tactics. The Maratha army retreated to Panipat.

Immediately afterwards (October 1795), a body of 5000 Sikhs poured into the Gangetic Doab. The local militia made no stand whatsoever against the Sikhs. The Maratha garrison in Saharanpur were scattered like chaff before the wind. The Maratha soldiers took refuge in the fort of Jalalabad where they were immediately besieged.

Another body of the Sikhs busied themselves in plundering the villages which refused to pay 'Rakhi' tax. The districts of Saharanpur and Muzaffarnagar lay entirely at their mercy as there was no opposition from local officers. At this juncture, Lakhwa Dada, the Maratha Commander of Saharanpur sought assistance from Appa Khande Rao Hari who sent George Thomas to help him. George crossed the Jamuna a little north of Delhi and hurriedly advanced towards the Sikhs. The Sikhs knowing full well the intrepidity of this man, retired to their homes.

On the 12th November, 1795, a fight took place between the Sikhs and Bapuji who was at this time the incharge of Sonapat, Panipat district. Many people were killed and wounded on both sides. On the 15th November, 1795, another action was fought between them in which Bapuji was defeated.<sup>1</sup>

After this year (1795) the Sikh raids into the Doab almost ceased and the Sikhs suddenly placed on the defensive, not by the Marathas but by a new power, which made its appearance in the political horizon in the form of George Thomas.

1. *Khalsa Nama*, p. 53-54.

## **George Thomas**

About six feet in height and extraordinarily strong, George Thomas was an Irish man born about the year 1758. The poverty of his parents left him un-educated and compelled him to leave for India to earn his livelihood. He served in a ship as a cabin boy and landed at Madras in 1780. He spent a few years in Carnatic with Poligars, a landless class of chiefs inhabiting the jungle and mountainous districts. Being dissatisfied with this position of his, he went to Madras and enlisted in the Nizam's army as a private gunner. Six months after, he gave up this job and in 1787 appeared in Delhi where he sought service under the celebrated Begam Samru who held the fief of Sardhana in the Meerut district. His ability and bravery soon won him the confidence of the Begam. She married him to a slave girl whom she had adopted. Soon, he was promoted to the command of a battalion in her army.

In 1789, Shah Alam II invested the fort of Gokalgarh, a little to the north-west of Agra then under the charge of Najaf Quli Khan, a rebel courtier of Delhi. Begam Samru with George Thomas was in attendance upon the Emperor. One night Najaf Quli Khan attacked the Imperial army when they were engrossed deep in debauch. This being so there was every possibility of the Emperor to have been taken prisoner if George Thomas had not been there. The Begam ordered Thomas to rescue the Emperor. He in response to the order marched to the spot to accomplish the task allotted to him. The Begam herself reached the scene forthwith and commenced the fight. After a desperate conflict Najaf Quli Khan was beaten and the Emperor saved. For this singular service, Thomas was given a valuable robe (khillat) and the Begam, a title "His Most beloved Daughter".

Next he was given by Begam the assignment of protecting her territories in the Doab. He stationed himself at Tappal in the Aligarh district and did his duty admirably. The Sikh incursions into his territory considerably decreased.

In 1792, he was thrown out of the Begam's favour by the intrigues of a rival named Le Vaisseau, who commanded the artillery of the Begam whom she later on married. Thomas raised the standard of revolt. The Begam, however, forced him to surrender. In view of the past services, Begam spared his life and allowed him to depart unmolested. He, at this juncture, had only fifty pounds.

Soon after, he took to plunder and soon attracted desperados whose number swelled to 250 mounted men in a short period. With this body he marched to Anupshahar where he was employed by Appa Khande Rao Hari, a feudatory of Sindhia in 1793.

After this, he was called upon to fight with the Sikhs. The circumstances ran as follows :

Shamli, an important town in Muzaffarnagar district near the eastern bank of the Jamuna was one of the parganas assigned to Gurdit Singh Ladwa who ruled over this place through his agent, a Sikh officer. The person was intriguing with his co-religionists on the other side of the river, and was stirring up a rebellion against the Marathas.

When the information regarding the mischievous conduct of Gurdit Singh reached Bapuji Malhar, the Maratha governor of Saharanpur, he ordered Thomas to punish him who immediately marched to Shamli. Gurdit Singh put up a gallant defence, but could not succeed. George Thomas captured the town by assault.

After the capture of Shamli, Thomas marched to Lakhnauti where Baharmand Ali Khan had revolted. Thomas forced him to come to terms.

Early in 1798, Thomas marched to Karnal where a body of Sikhs had gathered in rebellion against the Maratha rule in that district. He fought four successive actions against them. Thomas's artillery always proved superior to the tactics of the Sikhs who did not possess this arm. In this fight, Thomas lost 500 men and the Sikhs nearly twice as much. Peace was then concluded, and in accordance with the terms of the treaty, the Sikhs evacuated the place. After this Thomas marched into the Doab to join Bapuji against a Ruhilla chief, who, at the instigation of the Sikhs had crossed over the Ganges and created troubles in the Maratha country. But before Thomas's arrival, Bapuji had defeated him. A body of the Sikhs had reached there by this time to assist the Ruhillas, but finding Thomas ready to oppose them, retired without any fighting.

Shortly after, serious differences cropped up between Bapuji and George Thomas. It led to the outbreak of hostilities, and engagement took place at a ford on the Jamuna. Thomas was forced to leave the field.

Thomas was again left without a master and without the



means to feed and pay his troops numbering 3000. He took to the profession of a free-booter, and began plundering towns and cities in the neighbourhood of Delhi. His constant successes gave him the idea of setting himself up as a sovereign over some territory.

Consequently before close of 1798, George Thomas carved out an independent principality for himself. The territories possessed by Thomas were oval in shape, extending to the north as far as river Ghaggar to the south by the town of Behal, in the east to Maham and to the west to Behadra. There were 800 villages in all including several important towns such as Hissar, Hansi, Bhiwani, Fatehabad, Tohana and Georgegarh, now known as Jahazgarh. His total income was 2,86,000/- per year. Hansi was his capital. Situated as it was on a hill, it could easily be defended. Thomas repaired the fortifications around it and issued coins in his own name. In order to remove the scarcity of water, he sank thirty wells, and encouraged traders and merchants to settle there.

Thomas's restless energy did not allow him to remain satisfied with his possessions. He in the cold weather of 1798 started campaign against Bhag Singh of Jind, who was averse to Thomas establishing himself in his close neighbourhood.<sup>1</sup> Griffin, however, gives another reason. He says, "In 1797, he (George) made overtures to the principal Sikh chiefs inviting them to join him in a combined resistance to the Marathas, and in the conquest of Northern India, but they regarded him with suspicion for his selfish aims were largely concealed and they thought that to help him would only be to resign their own independence."<sup>2</sup>

Bakht Mal describes some other incident which brought about this catastrophe. He writes that one Hassu Singh complained to George that he had been dispossessed of a village received by him from the Raja of Patiala as a Jagir by Khushal Singh, a courtier of the Raja and that the Raja refused to interfere. He offered Rs. 7000 if he would restore him his estates. Thomas took the money and seized the village. Since the village was situated near the city of Jind, Bhag Singh felt alarmed and expressed his displeasure. This enraged Thomas and he decided to attack Jind.

The attack was made in the winter of 1798. The time was opportune, as Shah Zaman had invaded the Punjab and the Sikhs

1. William Franklin, *Memoirs of George Thomas*.

2. *Rajas of the Punjab*, p. 76.

got busy to oppose him. In view of the weak position of the Sikhs, George laid siege to Jind.

Bhag Singh offered a stout resistance and repulsed the first attack of Thomas (November 1798), who again regrouped and besieged the Jind fort. Raja of Patiala and other Sikh Sardars felt greatly perturbed but did not move out quickly owing to the hovering danger of the invasion of Shah Zaman. Bhai Lal Singh of Kaithal, Bhekha Singh, Diwan Ram Dayal, Sawan Singh, Shyam Singh and Mamu Singh rushed to help the Raja of Jind but because of the non-availability of the artillery could not achieve much against Thomas.

Raja Sahib Singh of Patiala wavered. In spite of the repeated requests conveyed to Raja Sahib Singh through special letters, he remained undecided. At last he consulted his sister, Sahib Kaur. She offered herself to take the field and requested him to furnish her with Rs. 10,000.

Raja Sahib Singh expostulated with her saying that all were full of apprehension on account of Shah Zaman's invasion and at such juncture it was improper for her to go. Bibi replied that "Raja Bhag Singh's house was as his own house; he had put off going from day-to-day, and now forbade her to go; who then could go as none of the old officers were there."

Bibi Sahib Kaur was joined on the way by Tara Singh, Baghel Singh and Hira Nand. As soon as the party came within the striking distance, Thomas subjected them to heavy fire with the result that the Sikhs had to beat a retreat at least for the time being.

In the meanwhile, the troops of Raja Jaswant Singh of Nabha, Gurdit Singh of Ladwa, Bhaga Singh and Mehtab Singh of Thanesar had arrived at Jind. Sahib Kaur again led the attack with the combined armies of the Sardars. This time, the Rani succeeded in occupying two redoubts of Thomas in which many of his best men were cut to pieces.

This proved the turning point and ultimately Thomas had to raise the siege (February, 1799). By this time the number of the Sikhs had grown to 1000 and Raja Sahib Singh had also left Patiala to join his sister with several pieces of artillery.

The Sikhs pursued the retiring Thomas. At Narnaul the Sikhs were encamping to engineer a surprise ambush but were foiled in their attempt by Thomas who unexpectedly attacked them putting them to flight. The Sikhs in this event suffered a lot. Their tents, baggage, howdahs of their elephants, their bazaar, 1000

saddles and about 1200 horses fell into Thomas's hand.

When the Sikhs reached Jind, they were dismayed to find the doors of the city closed. Bibi Sahib Kaur scolded and taunted them for their cowardice.

The Sardars having been cut to the quick, resolved to conquer or to perish in the struggle. They took fresh offensive against Thomas, but before actualising it, they were attacked by certain robbers. They mistook their attack as the attack of Thomas and feeling perplexed galloped away with great precipitation.

Both sides, now being tired of war, came to terms affirming that each party should remain in possession of their territories possessed before the siege of Jind. All Rajas were satisfied except Raja Sahib Singh of Patiala who refused to ratify the decision. Rani Sahib Kaur signed the same on her brother's behalf. This inflamed the Raja who imprisoned his sister who had to be released under threat of Thomas to attack his territory to free the lady who was so great, so courageous and so fine.

Thomas continued his aggressive career for a couple of years more, after which he was ultimately defeated and expelled from the Punjab by the French general Perron.

### ***Sikh raids on Delhi***

Delhi has been the centre as well as the focus of political activities from the times immemorial. In the epic period, it was the headquarter of the Kurus and it was here that they planned their strategic templates against the Purus. Then it was known as Indraprastha. In the Mauryan period, Raja Dhilu rebuilt it and named it Delhi after his own name. For a very long time after the Mauryan period Delhi did not find mention in the annals of India. Understandably, it did not play any significant part, although it was a witness to the rise and fall of different monarchies/republics emerging and then crashing at different places in the country some time under the weight of the invaders from across the north-western frontiers, sometime under the impact of their own contradictions. Even in the time of its relative eclipse, it continued to occupy a niche in the innermost recesses of the hearts of the people because tradition had made it a symbol of authority and splendour of Aryavarta.

In the twelfth century, Delhi shot into prominence as it became the capital of Chauhan ruler, Prithviraj. Under the Sultanate right upto the invasion of Timur, it enjoyed this exalted status.

In the later half of the fourteenth century, the last of the Sultan kings changed his capital to Agra. Babur, the first Mughal Emperor re-established Delhi as the seat of his empire in 1526. It experienced a temporary diminution in its importance when the Mughal Emperors, Akbar and Jahangir, moved their headquarters to Fatehpur Sikri and Agra, but the city regained its glory when Shah Jahan made it the headquarter of his empire and since then, it had enjoyed the status of being the headquarter of Indian Government. Nearly continuous holding of high status developed a sort of mystique about Delhi and people began to believe that "Master of Delhi is Ishawara, the Omnipotent, and its occupation was symbolic of hegemony of the occupation over the whole of the country. Understandably political aspirants seeking all India recognition aspired for the occupation of Delhi. The Sultan, the Mughals, the Marathas, Jats and Rajputs, all made attempts to occupy Delhi. The Sikhs too desired to possess Delhi or to have dominant voice in Delhi affairs.

In the case of the Sikhs, there were certain other propellent factors. It was the Delhi Emperor Jahangir who had conspired to bring about the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev and later imprisoned Guru Hargobind in the fort of Gwalior. Aurangzeb hatched conspiracies to breed schism among the Sikhs. Guru Gobind Singh had to suffer a lot at the hands of the Mughal Emperors, to save his new dispensation. According to one historical reckoning, Guru Gobind Singh did not die a natural death; he was got killed by the Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah, through a hireling. For a very long time, after the death of Banda Singh Bahadur, Sikhs suffered persecutions and massacres under the orders of the Mughal subedars of the Punjab. Even after the end of the Mughal rule in the Punjab, the sufferings of the Sikhs did not end. The Mughal Emperors at Delhi now at the instance of the deputy of Ahmad Shah Abdali did not change their attitude towards the Sikhs. Against this perspective, it was but natural that the Sikhs were scornful towards Delhi. In all they made fourteen invasions on Delhi or its suburbs. The first was conducted in April 1766 two years after the conquest of Sirhind (January 1764). Dal Khalsa plundered the Jagirs of Najib-ud-Daula. Immediately after, they advanced to Delhi. Afzal Khan, an appointee of Najib-ud-Daula to take care of Delhi, was filled with consternation and forbade the residents of Delhi to move towards Kalkaji where the Sikhs had encamped. Two days later, the Sikhs marched from

Okhlaghat and looted warehouses of rice and sugar in the Paharganj market.

The Sikhs undertook their second incursion in January 1770. The Sikhs made bold of entering the estates of Najib. Having sacked placed near Panipat, they attacked Delhi. Zabita Khan, the son of Najib-ud-Daula, put up stout resistance and as a result, the Sikhs had to retreat.

Once again in the same year, the Sikhs ravaged the neighbourhood of Delhi. The details of this invasion have been very faithfully recorded by a French Missionary, Father Peere Wendal, who at that time happened to be at Agra.

On January 18, 1774, the Sikhs invaded Delhi for the fourth time. They plundered Shahdara till midnight. It is said that the houses of the Mughal nobility were devastated while they themselves were stripped of their last penny.

In the tenth month of 1774, the Sikhs again ravaged the land in the environs of Shahjahanabad. This was their fifth invasion.

July 15, 1775, witnessed the sixth invasion of the Sikhs on Delhi. This time they raided Paharganj and Jai Singh Pura. The Mughal troops marched ahead to put a stop to the advancement of the Sikhs, but to no purpose. In the melee, the Mughals lost their sixty persons.

In October/November, 1776, the seventh invasion of the Sikhs on Delhi took place. Najaf Khan, the Prime Minister of the Mughal empire got totally confused and flabbergasted.

The eighth invasion of the Sikhs took place on September 23, 1778. Sahib Singh and other Sikh chiefs encamped near the Shalimar garden. Delhi top brass were overawed. Abdul Ahad's lieutenant Bahram Quli Khan thought it politic to welcome and entertain the Sikh Sardars with a grand feast. Mallu Khan, the son of Najib-ud-Daula who was with the Sikhs came into the city.<sup>1</sup>

October 1, 1778 was the Dussehra day. The Sikhs galloped to the Rakabganj. They demolished the mosque constructed at the spot which earlier was the residence of the Guru. The Sikhs stayed in the capital for about a month and all the expenses were borne by Ahad Khan.

On April 16, 1781 the Sikhs again attacked Delhi. This time they looted Shahdara and Paharganj, two important areas of Delhi.

Two years after i.e. in 1783, the Sikhs attacked Delhi for the

---

1. *Delhi Chronicle*, 31.



tenth time. A body of Sikhs comprising nearly forty thousand Sikhs encamped at Barari Ghat on the Jamuna river, 16 kms away from Delhi. From this base, they attacked and plundered Malkaganj and Sabzi Mandi. They killed a large number of people at Mughalpora. Prince Mirza Shikoh tried to halt their advance, but he was defeated and forced to flee away. The Sikhs broke through the Ajmerigate and plundered Haúz Qazi. The people of the city took shelter in the red fort. The Sikhs entered the fort on 11th March, 1783. In the Diwan Hall they placed Jassa Singh Ahluwalia on the throne and called him Badshah Singh. Soon after, he alighted as he realised that to appropriate to himself the title of Padshah was contrary to political ideology of the Sikhs, which ordained that Kingship lay in 'Panth' and not in any individual. It is generally believed that he did so because he was challenged by Jassa Singh Ramgarhia. This view is wrong because Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was never afraid of him. He did it solely out of respect for Sikh doctrines and traditions. The Mughal Emperor made peace with the Sikhs. As per agreement, Baghel Singh was allowed to stay for one year at Delhi to keep law and order as also to build seven historical Gurdwaras. He was also permitted to collect Rakhi from crown lands and the octroi duties of the city.

Their twelfth invasion took place on August 23, 1787. The Sikhs again attacked Shahdara. Ghulam Qadir and the Sikhs fought with the Imperial guards and defeated them. Maratha general Madho Rao Phalke was sent to oppose them at Shahdara. In the fight, many men were drowned in the river while a large number of them were killed and wounded. Shah Nizam-ud-Din and Deshmukh, who were watching all this from Diwan-i-Am, at once reached the bank of the river and from there showered balls and bullets on the Sikhs. But when the Sikhs appeared in front of them, they fled back. Phalke eventually surrendered in the fort of Shahdara, Deshmukh and Nizam-ud-Din ran away.

The Sikhs invaded thirteenth and fourteenth times in October 1787 and March 1788. The Sikhs in conjunction with Ghulam Qadir Ruhilla attacked the Red Fort on the 30th October, 1787. Twelve large cannon balls fell in the palace and killed a child in the courtyard of Diwan-i-Am. On the night of March 12, 1788, the Sikhs in association with Najaf Quli Khan attacked the tent of the Emperor and slaughtered the sleepy sots indiscriminately. The Emperor saved himself by taking shelter in the tent of Begam Samru which was surrounded on all sides by European troops.



Delhi, the capital of India, had been victim of so many incursions and sacks from 1739 to the close of the eighteenth century. Delhi suffered fifty-two incursions in fifty-one years from 1739 to 1788, two by Nadir Shah, five by Ahmad Shah Abdali, six by Ruhillas, nine by Turkish soldiers in the service of Mughal Government, one by Bahadur Khan Baloch, the founder of Bahadargarh, two by the Gujjars, three by the Jats, ten by the Marathas and fourteen by the Sikhs.

Of all, those who raided Delhi, Sikhs had a better record. They did not torture people to force them to disclose their hidden treasures while all others did that with impunity. The Sikhs never crossed moral restraints, they never outraged women, tortured or killed the old and the children. In contemporary records found mostly in Persian and written generally by Muslims or by Maratha agents posted at a number of places in the northern India, there is not a single instance either in Delhi or elsewhere where the Sikhs violated the modesty of women and committed excesses on general public. On the other hand, there were numerous examples which testified that Marathas, Ruhillas and Afghans gang-raped and molested women most brutally. In the then contemporary world when ethical standards were flouted and violated impudently, it was, indeed, praiseworthy that the Sikhs displayed exalted conduct, even under the most trying circumstances. The Sikhs did plunder but they did not do so like demons. They very rarely stripped common people of their ornaments et al. They always took care that the innocent were not harmed.

Generally, the Sikhs attacked Delhi for political reasons as for instance they did not want to allow time to Delhi to organise aggression against them. Sometime, they did so to assert that they were the power to be reckoned with. On two occasions, one in 1778 and the other in 1783, one of the dominant impulses was to raise structures at the places made hallowed by their Guru's associations.

## Chapter 17

# SHAH ZAMAN'S INVASIONS ON PUNJAB

Ahmad Shah Abdali's son Timur Shah led five campaigns five times in 1774-75, 1779-80, 1780-81, 1785, and 1788 in India to wrest Punjab from the Sikhs and to instal his own influence at Delhi, but he miserably failed in his mission. He directed attention mainly towards Peshawar, Kashmir, Multan, Sind and Bahawalpur, hopefully to first consolidate his position at these places before dealing with the Sikhs. In three of the Indian provinces, Kashmir, Bahawalpur and Sind, he did succeed every time to bring out submission at least provisionally, but so far as the Sikhs were concerned, success always eluded him. Except a few battles in the present north western frontier province (Pakistan), he did not attack the heart of their country. His only perennial gain was the recovery of Multan from the Sikhs.

Timur Shah died on 18th May, 1793 to be succeeded by his son Shah Zaman. A year after his succession, he contemplated to invade India but on account of the revolt of his brother in Herat province, he could not go beyond Peshawar. He made second invasion in A.D. 1795. Once again he had to retreat from Rohtas to attend to the invasion of Iran at the instigation of his brother Mahmud. Ahmad Shah Shahanchi Basi was ordered to stay at Rohtas, who did march upon Gujrat to meet only a crushing defeat. Ultimately Peshawar, Rohtas, Pothohar and Gheba country fell into the hands of Ranjit Singh. In 1796-97, he attacked India for the third time. This time he made elaborate preparations. He had several objectives in view while undertaking this expedition. He wanted to be acclaimed for retrieving the Mughal Empire from the domination of the Marathas. He wished to regain the overlordship of the Punjab. He desired to replenish his depleted treasury. Lastly, he intended to marry the daughter of Prince Akbar Shah whom he wanted to be acknowledged as successor to Shah Alam II to ultimately have his say in the affairs of the Mughal Empire.

Like a shrewd politician, he made overtures to the Sikh chiefs to allow him safe passage to Delhi and in return he would not wrest their territories and would feel satisfied with their agreeing to pay annual tribute.

The Sikh chiefs kept studied silence. He sent his messenger to Ranjit Singh to demand presents for the Afghan King. Ranjit Singh replied that he would deliver his presents in the battle-field. Various agents of Muslim chieftains especially of Punjab offered to him holding out promise of helping him with all their might. The Muslims of all hues and of all places were jubilant. The Marathas and the British felt alarmed. The Sikhs were determined to check him, their internecine conflicts notwithstanding. Only a few among them such as Sahib Singh of Patiala were black sheep.

The Shah launched his campaign on 12th October, 1796 at Kabul. He reached Peshawar on 26th November 1796 and reached Attock. From there he arrived at Hasan Abdal. Shortly after he occupied Rohtas. Ranjit Singh opposed the Afghan force at Miani and then at Pind Dadan Khan. Shah Zaman requested Ranjit Singh not to obstruct his passage, but he remained adamant and said, "Through the Grace of Waheguru, every Sikh is bound to obtain victory." Gujrat was also taken by the Afghans.

On 29th December 1796 Shah Zaman reached Eminabad. After that he reached Lahore which he occupied without facing any opposition as Lehna Singh Bhangi, a very popular Sikh chieftain who was in occupation had voluntarily handed over the city to its Muslim inhabitants, to be given to Shah Zaman.

The Shah at Lahore was given a mixed reception. The Muslims in general greeted him and the shopkeepers who were mostly Hindus kept quiet. The rulers of Jammu and Kasur submitted. The Muslim Zamindar of Kapurthala also offered submission.

On 11th January, 1797 a light cavalry detachment of the Durrani army raided Amritsar. In a hand to hand fight with the Sikhs, it was repulsed to the utmost chagrin of the Shah. He reached Amritsar at the head of a large number to retaliate. A desperate battle was fought between the Abdali soldiers and the Sikhs in which ultimately the Sikhs were winners. The Abdali's forces were pushed as far as Lahore. Abdali reached Lahore in the night of 12th January. It is said that 35000 Afghan soldiers and 15000 Sikhs were killed. The Sikhs' strength at Amritsar was immense as Baghel Singh, Tara Singh, Sahib Singh Kror Singhia,

Ranjit Singh et. al. had reached Amritsar.

The Sikhs did not cease to put pressure even after gaining victory. They hovered about Amritsar. Ranjit Singh at the head of 9000 troops was stationed, a few kms north of Amritsar, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia was at Sri Hargobindpur, Gulab Singh Bhangi at a distance of 30 kms. Lehna Singh was on the other side of the river Beas. Not only this, the Sikhs successfully cut off supplies to the Shah's camp. Harassed by the Sikhs particularly Ranjit Singh and falling short of money, he beat a retreat on 30th January, 1797. He was terrifically disappointed at the utter failure of his expedition.

At the city of Jehlum where he stopped for three days, he appointed Shahanchi Basi his governor of Rohtas and the country lying between rivers Jehlum and Indus.

Ahmad Shah Shahanchi Basi was a bad ruler. Bute Shah records, "he committed gross atrocities in the neighbourhood of Gujrat and forcibly took to wife, a beautiful Brahmin girl who belonged to village Harapur. He also seized a number of handsome lads and pretty girls. He was a sodomite as well as a debauch womaniser. He took little care for the peasantry who groaned because of heavy exaction. Except qualities of military generalship, his was a personality full of flaws and fuddles.

Soon he got the news that Ranjit Singh was planning to conquer Rohtas and Milkha Singh and Sahib Singh were to proceed to Rawalpindi from Gujrat. He, therefore marched towards Sialkot at the head of 12000 soldiers. His aim was to drive the Sikhs from Sialkot, Gujrat and Jehlum.

Ram Singh, a distant descendant of Guru Nanak, was cut to quick at the ignoble immoral deeds of Shahanchi Basi. He made up his mind to wage a holy war against him. He bathed, put on saffron coloured dress, carried the sacred Granth on his head accompanied by two persons who waved peacock feathers over the Granth shouting with the beat of Nagaras (Big Drums), "Ao Jinhan Shahidian Panian Ne", with flowing white beard, glowing face, roaring voice, height of over six feet, excellent physique and exemplary daring, his effect was marvellous. People began to rally round him. Many Sikh chieftains including Jodh Singh Ramgarhia, Ranjit Singh, Bhag Singh Ahluwalia, Tara Singh Ghaiba, Milkha Singh, Diwan Singh, Charat Singh Halaswale et. al.....also moved to his camp with their forces.

Continuously for three days, the battle raged. Finally the

Afghans were defeated at a place only seven kms east of Gujrat. Ram Singh suffered martyrdom. The Afghan general was shot dead. His corpse was treated with utmost contempt. His head with the tall Afghan cap was fixed on a spearhead and displayed in many villages and towns. The Brahmin girl was recovered from his tent. She was sent to her parents who declined to accept her. She took up her abode in a temple and was worshipped after her death as a Sati even by those who were unprepared to accept her as their own in her life-time. The esteem of the Sikhs in the eyes of the people, both Hindus and Muslims, rose.

Shah Zaman again invaded India. This time too, he was prompted to do so, firstly by his own ambition and secondly by the Indian princes including Shah Alam, the Mughal Emperor. Like a shrewd politician, he made out that he was undertaking the expedition to strengthen the government of the house of Timur Shah which is connected with us through the ties of mutual friendship and relationship. He also expressed that on the attainment of power, he would extirpate Marathas who had endeavoured to destroy the government of the Emperors of Hindustan. The Sikhs who had demolished the high prestige of the Emperor were also on his agenda to be finished. By playing up such an agenda, he tried to enlist sympathy or active help of the Muslim princes all over India. He did achieve a considerable success. The Muslim princes on the right side of Sutlej such as the rulers of Kasur and Multan and Bahawalpur etc. assured him of their active help.

In dealing with the Sikhs, he tried to give them impression that he only wanted acceptance of his lordship from them, although in his heart of hearts, he desired their destruction. He had to pose like this, because in his calculations, his assuming of real power at Delhi would increase his prestige and power to this extent that he would be in a better position to deal with the Sikhs. The British and the Marathas correctly gauged his motives and decided to take requisite steps not to allow his influence escalate.

Shah Zaman launched his campaign in September 1798, on his way to Lahore. He met first resistance at Sarai Kali from the brave wife of Milkha Singh. The Sikh chieftains left their forts along with their families, as the Shah advanced. Nizam-ud-Din of Kasur was defeated by Sahib Singh and Ranjit Singh near Shahdara. A gun shot wounded him and he was rescued by the son of

Shahanchi Basi. On November 19, Wazir Wafadar Khan was checked somewhere between Gujrat and Wazirabad by Ranjit Singh, Sahib Singh, Nahar Singh and Sondha Singh. At this juncture, Rani Sada Kaur who lay encamped at Amritsar reproached Bhag Singh Ahluwalia, Gulab Singh Bhangi and Jaimal Singh Kanhiya to help Ranjit Singh. She appealed to their ingrained love for their Panth and said, "If you are deposed to assist Ranjit Singh, advance and join him, if not, throw this dress and wear mine; give your clothes and I will march against the enemy."

Sada Kaur's persuasions had a desired effect. They very cleverly managed to sneak into the rear of the Afghan forces and plundered the caravan of merchants carrying provisions and equipage. This attack exercised great influence on the Shah. He hesitated to march to Delhi leaving the Sikhs behind unsubdued.

According to the news-writer, there were many Sikh chiefs who "If were united could collect a body of fifty or sixty thousand fighting men but dischord and jealousy deprived them of all power of opposition."

Notwithstanding this, all of them with a notable exception of Raja Amar Singh of Patiala were averse to the success of Shah Zaman. Therefore, they, sometimes individually and sometimes in groups of three or four, blocked the march of Afghan forces.

On 24th November, 1798, the Shah quietly sent a force of ten thousand to attack Amritsar. Ranjit Singh and Sahib Singh who were patrolling near Amritsar along with five hundred horse instantly engaged them in a fight. On hearing of this engagement, Gulab Singh, Jodh Singh and Budh Singh with 2000 chosen horse joined in the combat. In the battles, the Afghans were worsted and compelled to retreat to Lahore.

The Sikhs continued to pressurise the Shah. He entered Lahore on 30th November, 1798 and on the same day it was reported that 12000 camels laden with fresh and dried fruit escorted by 15000 troops on their way from Kabul to Lahore were plundered by Dal Singh, uncle of Ranjit Singh, in the village of Talwandi Muse Khan. The Sikhs made a comprehensive strategy to stop supplies to the Afghan Camp. The attempts of the ruler of Kasur and various Afghan contingents to procure supplies were also foiled by the Sikhs.

The Shah now resorted to a strategem of sowing differences among the Sardars who were seemingly at loggerheads with one another. He issued special instructions to Wafadar Khan to this



effect. Neki Singh was specially deputed to negotiate with the Sikhs. He forged rapport with them and after protracted negotiation succeeded in prevailing upon some of them to send their representative to the Shah but nothing came out. The Shah ultimately decided to return to Kabul. In his decision, he was influenced not only by the continuous resistance of the Sikhs but also by the invasion of the king of Iran on Sabz War, about 1000 kms from Kabul and the revolt of Prince Mahmud of Herat. Shah left Lahore on 4th January, 1799. On the way the Sikhs decided to harass him while he was crossing the river Chenab. Ranjit Singh, however, dissuaded them from executing this design. Ranjit Singh's intentions seemed to be that Muslims at least in his area of influence should be conciliated.

Shah's fifth invasion was the last Muslim invasion on India. The Khalsa, though riven with disunity, erected a wall of concrete against the spate of invasions from north west which wrought havoc on the Indian soil, thereby putting a stream of immigration of ruthless adventurers from Turkistan, Iran, Afghanistan and Baluchistan which had supplied to various Muslim kingdoms in this country nearly all of their distinguished statesmen, eminent politicians, illustrious administrators and celebrated generals.

#### IMPORTANT SOURCES

1. *National Archives of India*, Foreign Political Consultation, 9th June, 1777.
2. Shahamat Ali, *The History of Bahawalpur*, etc., London, 1848.
3. Elphinstone, Mountstuart, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul and its Dependencies in Persia, Tartury and India, etc.*; 2 Vols; London, 1815.
4. Sayyid Imam-ud-din Husaini, *Tarikh-i-Husain Shabi*, 1798 MS.
5. *District Gazetteers*, Rawalpindi.
6. Wadera, Ganesh Dass, *Risalu-E-Sabih Nama or Char Bagh-e-Punjab*, 1849, edited by Kirpal Singh, Amritsar.

## Chapter 18

# MARATHA-SIKH RELATIONS

In March 1752, a treaty was concluded between Ahmad Shah Durrani and Muin-ul-Mulk (Mir Mannu) in which it had been agreed, (i) that the provinces of Lahore and Multan were to be considered as annexed to the Afghan Empire of Ahmad Shah Durrani, (ii) that the Muin-ul-Mulk would as usual remain the governor of these provinces on behalf of the Shah and (iii) that the internal administration of the province was, in no way, to be interfered with; only the surplus revenues was henceforth to be sent to the Afghan Emperor and the final orders in the highest questions were to be taken from him. Obviously, Ahmad Shah Abdali achieved success in his object of chopping off a large piece of the Punjab and annex it to his central Asian Empire.

In April 1757 (conclusion of the fourth invasion), Ahmad Shah Durrani went a step further. In this fateful year, the whole of the country lay prostrate at his feet. Emperor Alamgir II was helpless and he retained his crown only as a gift from the invader who entered the royal fort as a conqueror. Abdali acquired booty worth crores; but above everything he was recognised as the sovereign of the entire country to the north and northwest of Delhi with his son Timur installed as his viceroy of Lahore. This obviously signified the establishment of the Afghan kingdom in the Punjab.

Timur, the son of Ahmad Shah Abdali, did his best to control the affairs of the Punjab, but he could not achieve his object, firstly because the Sikhs were determined to strike a mortal blow to the Afghan rule as they had done in the case of the Mughal rule and hence they continued to be refractory and offensive to the Afghans, and secondly, Adina Beg, the outstanding chief of the Punjab was insincere and reluctant to offer them wholehearted cooperation. When Timur looked rigid and determined to reduce him to a meek vassal, he as a reaction to it made up his mind to establish himself as the ruler of the Punjab. This idea had been

lurking in his mind for long. But how to translate this idea into a reality.

The Sikhs were his friends and with their active cooperation he had defeated the Afghan general Sarfraz Khan and Murad Khan in the Jullundur Doab. But the Sikhs had their own aspirations and could not always be expected to fight his battles. They had not yet forgotten the days of their independent rule under Banda Singh and were eagerly waiting for an opportunity to reassert their authority. In view of this, Adina Beg could not depend upon them in his project of establishing his own rule in the Punjab. He, therefore, tapped a more fruitful source and opened negotiations with the Marathas.

Balaji Rao Peshwa's brother, Raghunath Rao, was then in Delhi. He readily responded to the invitation of Adina Beg and agreed to march into the Punjab. As per terms agreed upon by both the parties, Adina Beg was to pay a lakh of rupees a day to Raghunath Rao, when his army would be marching and fifty thousand when it halted.

On October 22, 1757, Raghunath Rao left Delhi for Punjab. Malhar Rao also accompanied him. On the way, he halted at Kunjpura and accepted the submission of its commandant Najabat Khan in February, 1758. He then pushed on to the north and passing through Ambala, Mughal-di-Sarai, Rajpura and Sarai Banjara, the Maratha army reached in the neighbourhood of Sirhind on March 9, 1758.

Here Adina Beg joined the Marathas. The Sikhs also joined as an ally of Adina Beg. This was the first political contact of the Sikhs with the Marathas. The Sikhs met the Marathas as an ally of Adina Beg and not as an independent power, which shows clearly that upto this time, the Sikhs had not been able to gauge clearly the goal of the shrewd political game which Adina Beg had planned to play. Anyhow, the "Sikh contact with the Marathas could have yielded far-reaching results, if there had been any statesman of vision on either side. Such an alliance in A.D. 1758 might have been fraught with momentous consequences and might have been a very decisive factor in the events leading upto the campaign of 1761. The supposed superiority of the Marathas in guerilla warfare was a myth. The Afghans, with their tireless Turki steeds outstrode 100 miles in 14 hours to surprise Malhar Rao Holkar. Atai Khan performed an equally remarkable feat when he caught Gobind Pant Bundela. In the skirmishing outside

Panipat, the Afghans almost invariably had the better of it. On the other hand, when it came to shock action the Maratha cavalry, with its superb elan never failed to rout their opponents. The Sikhs with their endurance and rapidity of movement, the excellent size and swiftness of their horses, resented the ill-clad but powerful troops of Shivaji. They were pre-eminently well-fitted for a guerilla method of warfare, being in this respect very much superior to the Marathas. If as a supplement to the Maratha plan of shock action, there had been the Sikh scheme of skirmishing after the Parthian fashion behind the enemy, affairs might have taken an entirely different turn." But neither among the Marathas nor among the Sikhs was there anyone far-sighted enough to realize that the combination was the vital need of the hour. The unbecoming pride and presumption of the Marathas, and their failure to grasp the realities of the situation the proverbial Maratha greed for plunder, the presence of the wily Adina Beg whose interest it was to keep these two peoples divided, the prevalent Sikh view that regarded the Marathas as intruders—all combined to make a fusion between these two peoples an impossibility.

Anyway, the Marathas, Adina Beg and the Sikhs attacked Sirhind. Abdus Samad, the Durrani governor of the Sirhind was worsted. He himself fought bravely but his soldiers fled and he was captured on March 21, 1758. The Sikhs who regarded the city of Sirhind as accursed city because the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh had been bricked alive and butchered to death here, resorted to plunder with fury of an injured lion. The Marathas were the next to plunder it and on the third day, people from the neighbouring villages also reached here and carried away whatever they could lay their hands upon.

The Marathas grew jealous of the Sikhs, for they had the lions' share in the loot of Sirhind. A small skirmish took place between the two and peace was brought about by Adina Beg. It was then agreed that to avoid any collision between the two warrior peoples, the Sikhs, about fifteen thousand in number, should always keep two stages ahead of the Maratha army in their march upon Lahore.<sup>1</sup>

At Sirhind, question was discussed whether Raghunath Rao should proceed to Lahore or turn back, leaving the Punjab to the Sikhs who were then measuring swords with the Afghans to rescue

1. *Tarikh-i-Imad-ul-Mulk*, pp. 379-80.

*Prachin Panth Parkash* by Rattan Singh, pp. 423-24.

it from their usurpation. As the Emperor, his Wazir Ghazi-ud-Din Imad-ul-Mulk, and Adina Beg pressed him hard to push on to the north, he willy-nilly agreed to it.

Lahore was then in the possession of Timur Shah with Sardar Jahan Khan as his deputy and commander of the Afghan army stationed there. On hearing of the march of Maratha-Sikh armies to the north, Jahan Khan moved to the town of Jalalabad on the Beas to bar their passage, but to his surprise, they had already entered the Jullundur Doab from some other point. He rushed back to Lahore. Timur and Jahan Khan considered it prudent to retreat before the advancing Maratha-Sikh-Adina Beg armies. The combined armies arrived at Amritsar on or about the Baisakhi day, April 10, 1758. The Marathas paid a reverential visit to the Sikh Temple where they were received by the Sikh Sardars with all the honour and hospitality due to friendly pilgrims.<sup>1</sup> Lahore was occupied by them on or about the 20th of April, 1758. The fleeing Afghans were pushed upto the river Chenab. The contemporary *Khazana-i-Amira*, page 101, followed by *Jam-i-Jahan Numa*, page 120, says that the advance-guards of the enemy pursued the Afghans as far as the bank of the river Jehlum. This evidently refers to the main armies.

The Sikh Sardars such as Sardar Charat Singh Sukarchakia, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Tara Singh Ghaiba, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, Hari Singh, Lehna Singh, Gujjar Singh and Jhanda Singh Bhangi participated in this campaign along with ten to fifteen thousand horse-men. The Afghan captives were made to clean the sacred tank which Ahmad Shah and Jahan Khan had desecrated and filled up with rubbish on their way back to Afghanistan in May 1757. The Marathas did not consider it proper to take upon themselves the task of direct administration of the Punjab. They were prompted to take such a decision by certain important factors. Firstly they soon realised that it was not possible to hold the Punjab with a Deccani garrison in the face of the rising power of the Sikhs. Secondly, the financial position of the central Maratha government at Poona was not strong enough to maintain their garrison in the distant parts of the Punjab. Thirdly, the Deccanics born and brought up in cold climate of Poona and its neighbourhood would find it difficult to stand the rigours of the

1. Dr. Ganda Singh, 'The Maratha-Sikh Relations', from *Punjab. Past and Present*, Vol. I, ii, p. 325.

scorching heat and piercing chill of the Punjab. Fourthly, they were recalled to the Deccan to make a grand attack on the Nizam whose existence in the heart of the Maratha country was a great danger. During monsoon of 1759, the plans for humbling the Nizam were completed, and by the end of 1759, all the famous Maratha warriors gathered and the campaign of Udgir began.

Yet it did not mean that they did not have the desire to keep the area between Sutlej and Attock under their control. From subsequent events one is apt to ridicule this as an audacious venture of the Marathas trying to hold such an extensive territory from Poona; but the conditions of 1758 did not warrant such fears. Abdali was then finding extreme difficulty even in holding his own. In 1758 he was threatened by the Persians from the west; his own nephew Abdur Rehman rose against him and went to Poona seeking the Peshwa's support in regaining his inheritance.

Accordingly Raghunath Rao handed over the administration of the Punjab to Adina Beg Khan on the condition that he would pay a fixed yearly tribute of 75 lakhs of rupees. Adina Beg himself went to the Jullundur Doab leaving his son-in-law Khwaja Mirza Khan as his deputy in Lahore and placing Sadiq Beg Khan in-charge of Sirhind. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Ala Singh and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia were brave leaders and allies commanding a considerable following of the best soldiers in Asia. Abdus Samad Khan who was a prisoner in Maratha hands, with characteristic double-dealing, offered to undertake the defence of the frontier against Abdali on behalf of the Marathas. From Poona, the Peshwa despatched Abdur Rehman with all haste to Lahore with instructions to Raghunath to make the best use of him in the scheme he was now executing.

Raghunath Rao, therefore, consigned the trans-Indus regions of Peshawar to these two Muslim agents, Abdur Rehman and Abdus Samad Khan, posting them at Peshawar, with a considerable body of troops. They were asked to capture Kabul and Qandhar which meant, to all intents and purposes, extinction of Ahmad Shah Abdali—the thing which Abdali could not tolerate. Ramji and Shamji were sent to Multan. Tukoji Holkar, Sabaji Sindhia, Renko Anaji, Ravaji, Sakha Dev, Gopal Rao Barve and other captains were also asked to hold the Punjab, at least for a few months before Dattaji Sindhia could arrive and make some permanent arrangement. Dattaji was then at Poona and expected



to come to the Punjab shortly. Obviously, the weakest link in the chain was that no strong Maratha leader of prestige was associated with Abdus Samad Khan to guard and hold Peshawar. The Peshwa sent distinct orders to station Holkar at Lahore. As Dattaji was shortly expected, the provisional arrangement was hoped by Raghunath Rao and Holkar to last a few months without disturbance. But well-posted with all the Indian details as Abdali was, he struck at this very weak point, utilised Najib Khan who killed Dattaji.

Raghunath Rao left Lahore on the 10th of May, 1758. Adina Beg died in September 1758, only four months after the departure of Raghunath Rao from Lahore. Mirza Jan Khan was confirmed as the governor of Lahore. Early in October 1758, Antaji Manakeshwar gained an upper hand in the Mughal capital of Delhi. He deputed Tukoji Holkar and Narsoji Pandit to Lahore. From there, they pushed on to beyond the Indus, evidently to keep in check the Gakhars and Afghans and we find Tukoji at Peshawar in November, 1758. In the middle of the month, however, he had come back at the call of Mirza Jan Khan.

In December, Dattaji Sindhia arrived at Delhi. He, in February 1759 proceeded to the Sutlej where Sadiq Beg and Adina Beg's widow and son met him. In consultation with them and the other advisers he posted Sabaji Sindhia at Lahore for the protection of the Punjab as Sabaji had already subjugated the territory upto the Indus. The Peshwa had suggested the name of Naro Shankar for the sole charge of the Punjab and Dattaji also accepted the suggestion, but Naro Shankar was not very enthusiastic on the point as he had not received the express letter from the Peshwa himself. Dattaji could not personally remain in Lahore as he had other important affairs to attend to. There was then no news of any threat from Abdali and things were quiet beyond the frontier. Sabaji, however, found that the Sikhs were virtually in possession of Lahore and its neighbourhood with huge forces at their disposal, even then he addressed himself to the task of administering the Suba of Punjab.

By the middle of August 1759 Ahmad Shah Durrani became free from his entanglements in Baluchistan after having concluded a treaty with Naseer Khan, the chief of Baluchis. He was now free to pay his attention to the affairs in the Punjab in particular and to those of India in general. Najib-ud-Daula, Abdali's agent in Delhi, was besieged by Dattaji Sindhia at Sakartal and sent

frantic appeals to Ahmad Shah to which Abdali was bound to respond. Moreover, he must satiate his desire of wreaking revenge on the Marathas for their inflicting defeat on his son Timur Shah and his commander-in-chief, Jahan Khan. Besides this, after Adina Beg's death, Maratha detachments of Sabaji Patel penetrated as far as Peshawar region<sup>1</sup>—the fact which he could not tolerate.

In view of all this, towards the end of August, 1759 Ahmad Shah despatched a force under Jahan Khan who was defeated by Sabaji Patel. Irritated by this defeat and the earlier failure of Nur-ud-Din Bamezei expedition to the Punjab, the Shah made up his mind in October 1759 to invade India for the fifth time.

Despatching Jahan Khan in advance, Ahmad Shah descended upon India in October 1759. The Marathas could offer no appreciable resistance to the invader, and Sabaji Patel fled to Delhi. The Sikhs, however, gave a better account of themselves. In the battle that was fought in the neighbourhood of Lahore, the Afghan forces had a difficult time and could only triumph after a hard-fought contest in which 2000 of them were slain and Jahan Khan was wounded. Lahore was thus occupied by the Afghans. Ahmad Shah was in a great hurry to measure the swords with the Marathas and hence he could make no permanent arrangement in the Punjab. He appointed Zain Khan at Sirhind, Sar Buland Khan was given the governorship of Lahore. But Sar Buland Khan remained in the Jullundur Doab and sent the Subedari 'Sanad' to Dadan Khan in Lahore, who after some time found himself so very hard-pressed by the Sikhs that he offered to resign to Sar Buland Khan. Amir Mohammad Khan was appointed the next governor.

Ahmad Shah then pushed on southward and brushing aside the opposition of Dattaji at Taraori near Thanesar on December 24, 1759, and defeating and killing him at Barari Ghat on January 9, 1760, he became the undisputed master of Delhi. But it had never been his intention to take possession of the throne of India either for himself or for his son. He, therefore, allowed the new puppet Emperor Shah Jahan II to continue in the fort and later recognised Shah Alam II as the Emperor of India.

But the Abdali's main object was to settle scores with the Marathas. In fact he thought that if he could crush the formidable Marathas with one swift blow, he would be able to overwhelm

---

1. Bharat Itihas Mandal, Quarterly, July 1943, as quoted by N.K. Sinha in his book *Rise of the Sikh Power*.

this contemptible band of freebooters, known as the Sikhs and also to rule over the Punjab, Sirhind, Kashmir and Sind.<sup>1</sup>

With this frame of mind Ahmad Shah proceeded to achieve his object; he negotiated with Shuja-ud-Daula of Oudh, with the Bangash Afghan and the Rajputs; he led expeditions against the Jats. During the year of 1760, Ahmad Shah's activities were almost a game of hide and seek with the Marathas till they came face to face on the historic battlefield of Panipat (November-December 1760). Here the Shah blockaded the Marathas from all sides and cut off their supplies of food and fodder. The Kunjpura granary was captured by Daler Khan Ruhilla, and the town of Panipat had not accumulated foodgrain or fodder. Similarly southward road to Delhi had been captured.

### **Ala Singh's support to the Marathas**

The Marathas' condition thus was precarious. In this perilous state of affairs, Maratha statesmanship failed miserably. In fact Sada Shiv Bhau was a mediocre; all other Maratha leaders were myopic in their political vision. They did not take any cue from the preceding history of Afghan-Sikh enmity and failed utterly to win over the Sikhs and enlist their fighting strength on their side against the common enemy, Ahmad Shah Abdali. Only Sardar Ala Singh of Patiala helped them in their critical hour with cart-loads of provision from the northwest. This, however, could not help the Marathas for long and, in despair, Sada Shiv sued for peace. But the negotiations were not successful and the disastrous battle of Panipat was fought on January 14, 1761 resulting in the defeat of the Marathas.

Ahmad Shah did not have any intention of staying in the country. He established Prince Jiwan Bakht in the citadel of Delhi and desired his father, Shah Alam II, then at Patna, to return to his capital and occupy the throne of his ancestors. He then returned to Afghanistan leaving Delhi on the 20th of March, 1761.

When Ahmad Shah began his return march, the Sikhs began to harass him. According to Browne, "After the third battle of Panipat, as soon as the Durrani army had passed the Sutlej, the Sikhs began to plunder the stragglers but Ahmad Shah could do

---

1. A perusal of the events connected with the life of Ahmad Shah Abdali would convince a student of history that he definitely intended ruling over the Punjab, Sirhind, Kashmir and Sind. Delhi, Agra, Mathura and other places were reserved for plunder.

nothing as his army was loaded with plunder." Under the command of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, they surprised the Afghans at the ferry of Goindwal on the Beas, and rescued from their clutches as many as two thousand and two hundred female captives and restored them to their homes.

All this naturally irritated him but he did not take any effective measures against them, as he could not because he was encumbered with heavy baggage and booty. He, however, undertook sixth invasion solely against the Sikhs who suffered a loss of over ten thousand lives at his hands on the 5th February, 1762. This great holocaust is known in history as Wadda Ghalughara. All this, however, failed to make any depressing effect upon the Sikhs; it rather stirred them to quick retaliation. In less than a month of the desecration of Amritsar temple while the Shah was still at Lahore, the Sikhs were up in arms against the Afghan governor of Sirhind and defeated him in a pitched battle at Arnaulagarh,<sup>1</sup> 15 kos from Sirhind (April 1762).

In the next two years, the Sikhs extended their power in all directions and by 1765, they were the masters of the Punjab.

### **Next contact with the Marathas, 1765**

These successes of the Sikhs enhanced their prestige and they became power to be reckoned with. They, in cis-Sutlej area, were feared as much as they were recognised as a force in trans-Sutlej area. In 1763, they were approached by the Jats of Bharatpur to help them against Najib-ud-Daula Ruhilla, the Indian agent and protege of Ahmad Shah Durrani. Suraj Mal, the Jat Raja of Bharatpur was killed on December 25, 1763 and Najib returned home, obviously to prepare for retaliatory action by the infuriated Jats. While Jawahar Singh, the son of Suraj Mal was busy with the mourning rites, his Sikh sympathisers from the Punjab condoled with him by attacking the territories of his enemy. Forty thousand of them crossed the Jamuna in February 1764 and took Saharanpur on the 20th. Najib-ud-Daula could face them in the field of battle. Najib knew that only the previous month, the Khalsa killed the Afghan governor Zain Khan of Sirhind (January 14), had become the master of the cis-Sutlej Punjab. He, therefore, hurried to the scene and paid to the Sikh Sardars a sum of eleven lakhs of rupees. This not only humbled the proud Ruhilla and added to the prestige

1. J.N. Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Vol. II, p. 490.

of the Khalsa but also upset Najib's plans against the Jats.<sup>1</sup>

Jawahar Singh, however, was not satisfied till he wreaked vengeance upon Najib. He sought the assistance of the Sikhs and the Marathas. Fifteen thousand Sikhs joined his force (end of October, 1764). Najib had to surrender Delhi in February 1765.

Upto this time, the relations between the Jats and the Marathas got on well; but then suddenly, they became strained. According to Qanungo, Malhar Rao had made a fool of the Jat by taking his money and at the same time baffling his object. Jawahar Singh refused to pay the balance due to him. Malhar Rao, therefore, joined Nahar Singh, the brother of Jawahar Singh and helped him defeat the Maratha garrison of the fort of Dhaulpur and capture it. This ended the strife between the Jat brothers, as Nahar Singh ended his life in despair by swallowing poison, probably because he was abandoned by Malhar Rao after the capture of the said fort.<sup>2</sup>

After this, the Sikhs rushed back to the Punjab as Ahmad Shah Abdali had conducted seventh invasion (November 1764-March 1765). They put up stubborn resistance to the Durrani who was forced to return to Afghanistan (end of March, 1765) never to be able to hold the possession of the capital of Lahore which the Sikhs permanently occupied on April 16, 1765.

In the winter of 1765-66 (December-March), Jawahar Singh conducted a campaign against Madho Singh, the ruler of Jaipur. The Sikhs assisted him with a force of 25 thousand. Madho Singh called to his help the Maratha Sardar Malhar Rao Holkar. In the battle of March 13-14, 1766, Jawahar Singh and his Sikh friends gained a signal victory over Madho Singh and his Maratha allies. Again on February 1768, the Sikhs helped Jawahar Singh against him to gain victory in the battle of Kama against his adversary who was being assisted, this time also, by the Marathas. The tension between the two, however, ended with their deaths—Madho Singh on March 6, 1768, and Jawahar Singh in July.

By the close of the year 1767, the Afghan power in the Punjab was completely shattered and there was no hope left for its revival, with the result that Ahmad Shah's Indian agent, Najib-ud-Daula felt very much dejected and made up his mind to withdraw from Imperial entanglements. "This development threw Shah Alam into

1. Dr. Ganda Singh, 'The Maratha-Sikh Relations', from *Past and Present*, Vol. I-II, p. 329.

2. Qanungo, *History of Jats*, pp. 185-87.



the greatest perplexity; who would guard his mother and heir in that city after the withdrawal of Najib?" And if he recalled all his family from Delhi, the Sikhs who were now officially masters of Sirhind and practically supreme over Hariana and the upper Doab, would take unopposed possession of the capital, and it would be impossible for Shah Alam to recover it from their strong hands. The holder of the capital was naturally in the position of a kingmaker. What was there to prevent the Sikh lords of Delhi, from crowning a puppet from among the swarm of beggarly vagrant Shahzadas, and under cover of his legal authority conquering the empire for themselves.

The question of the Emperor's residence in Delhi thus became a live issue from 1768 onwards. Just at this time, the Indian world at last became convinced that Ahmad Shah Abdali would not come to India again, and all hopes and fears from that quarter definitely ceased. At this critical juncture, Jassa Singh, the Sikh Sardar had invited the Emperor (January 1768) to come to Delhi "assuring him that the whole empire would be again united and restored to him." Shah Alam had replied that he could not take that action unless the whole body of Sikh Sardars formed a binding confederacy to escort him and sent a written pledge to that effect.<sup>1</sup> What came out of it is not known. "Perhaps the Sikh Sardars had written their letters to the Emperor in view of a joint project suggested by a Maratha agent in November, 1767, for the Emperor to be escorted to Delhi by the English, the Marathas, the Rajputs and the Ruhillas, in concert. There were lengthy negotiations between the parties but without any tangible result."<sup>2</sup>

On October 31, 1770, Najib died, absolutely shattered in health and frustrated in his ambitions. A year earlier, he had his turban tied on the head of his son, Zabita Khan as a mark of having made his successor and giving him full freedom to settle the affairs of the Sikhs either by peace or by war without consulting any one. Zabita Khan made peace with the Sikhs and in consultation with his god-father Tukoji Holkar, invited them for help against the impending attack from the Imperial agents. This afforded to Najib the much-needed respite to attend to his domestic affairs. The news of the coming of the Marathas to the north, was made most of by Najib who smoothed the way for his son with a friendly

1. J.N. Sarkar, *Full of the Mughal Empire*, Vol II.

2. Dr. Ganda Singh, 'The Maratha-Sikh Relations'—a research paper which appeared in *Punjab. Past and Present*, p. 331.



alliance with southerners. This done, Najib-ud-Daula expired, on October 31, 1770, entrusting his son to the care of Tukoji Holkar.

Najib's death brought new factors to emerge on the political scene. Zabita Khan, the Emperor felt, was not strong enough to stand against the Sikhs if they decided to attack the capital. The Rajputs, the English and even Shuja-ud-Daula the so-called first minister of the empire, were not very enthusiastic to escort him to Delhi. Under such circumstances, he entered into negotiations with the Marathas in November, 1770. As a result of these negotiations, Mahadji Sindhia escorted him to Delhi to which place the Emperor reached on January 6, 1772.

For some time, the political affairs at Delhi stumbled on; but on April 6, 1782, Mirza Najaf Khan died and with him disappeared from the political scene, an able administrator and cool-minded statesman. Delhi plunged into confusion. The struggle for power between Afrasiyab Khan and Muhammad Shafi (April-November 1782) worsened the situation. The events moved fast. Shafi was murdered by Mohammad Beg Humdani on September 23, 1783, and his successor Afrasiyab Khan was assassinated on November 2, 1784, by Zain-ul-Abidin. Emperor Shah Alam was now forced by circumstances to seek the protection of Mahadji Sindhia and to appoint him on December 3, 1784, Vakil-i-Mutliq, to dominate the politics of northern India for a decade to come.

When, during the days following the death of Mirza Najaf Khan, anarchy prevailed at Delhi, the Sikhs felt that there was a fair chance of effacing the Mughal rule thereby enabling them to have the area between Sirhind and Delhi under their control. According to Dr. Ganda Singh, "Sardar Jai Singh Kanhiya and other Sikh leaders met at Patiala some time in April or May 1783 to discuss the suggestion and formulate a plan." They felt that if the Marathas could cooperate with them in this project, it could be easily accomplished. For this purpose, they sent a Vakil to Mahadji Sindhia and also wrote to the Maratha agent at Delhi. It was a grand idea and was in keeping with the policies and plans of the early Maratha leaders. But there was no encouraging response from Mahadji, as he had his own narrow designs which did not allow him to think of the All India Empire strong enough to stem the tide of the British Imperialism which was fast striking roots in this country. At best, Sindhia's aim at this juncture was to bolster up the cause of the important Mughal Emperor and to use his name to exact tribute from the provinces or Jagirdars which once formed

part of the Mughal Empire.

In the next decade, Marathas were busy with the politics of Delhi and there were very few occasions when they came in direct conflict with the Sikhs. Soon after becoming the Vakil-i-Mutliq, Mahadji Sindhia had to face a deep financial crisis as also heavy responsibilities. He possessed not an inch of the Imperial land with the exception of the ground occupied by his camp, and he had to fight to obtain the entire Mughal dominions. The Imperial capitals of Delhi and Agra and other parts were in hostile lands. Major James Browne was desperately working to bring the Mughal Empire under British protection like the kingdom of Oudh. Najaf Quli Khan was trying to create disturbances in the crown-lands. The safety of the crown-lands in Delhi and also that of Delhi was also a problem, as the Sikhs frequently invaded the crown-lands under the pretence of realizing the 'Rakhi' and devastated the country.

Under such circumstances Mahadji Sindhia decided to pacify the Sikhs. He sent some of his trusted agents one after the other to open peace parleys with the Sikh chiefs, then present in the Doab. He also invited some Sikh Vakils in his camp early in January, 1765. Sindhia advised them to refrain from ravaging the Doab and the crown-lands, offering to take a booty of 5000 Sikhs in his pay. The Vakils were dismissed about the end of the month with valuable presents for their master. Shortly afterwards, he sent Partap Singh the Machhari Rajput Raja, to prevail upon the Sikhs to agree to these terms, and he made a fervent appeal to Baghel Singh in the name of religion. Another agent Roz-mal communicated to Baghel Singh to take advantage of the favourable situation.

In February, when Dal Khalsa lay encamped at Kutana Ghat, they were invited by Najaf Quli to ravage the crown-lands near Delhi. The Sikhs immediately responded to the call, and in a body of about 25000 approached the Imperial capital. They commenced realizing tribute from the people. Sada Shiv Dinkar, the Maratha at Delhi, writing to Nana Farnauis in February 1785 stated: "The Emperor rules inside the city while outside the Sikhs are supreme."

These turbulences perturbed the mind of the Emperor. As some of the princes were at Salimgarh, he felt afraid lest some prince might be raised to the throne by Najaf Quli and the Sikhs. He sought urgent assistance from Mahadji who appointed one of his most efficient and trusted lieutenants, Ambaji Ingle faujdar of

the districts situated in the north of Delhi with the Machhari Raja as his assistant for the purpose of establishing Sindhia's rule in Delhi. Babu Malhar was to restore order in the Doab. Babu Malhar's forces were attacked and worsted at Meerut by the Sikhs although immediately after, Babu Malhar succeeded in inflicting a defeat on the Sikhs and establishing a military post at Meerut.

Ingle established peace at Delhi by punishing and killing Gujjars in a large number, but still the goal was distant. He must reckon with the Sikhs in order to establish peace in the area. He proceeded to Barari Ghat to meet the Sikhs, who in a body of about 12000 men under the leadership of nine chiefs including Rai Singh, Jai Singh, Bhag Singh and Bhanga Singh lay encamped near Sonapat. Some Sikhs secretly approached Ingle's camp and carried away a number of his camels. Ingle opened negotiations with them and met the Sikh leaders on the bank of Jamuna. He fixed his camp at Bakhtawarpur (13 miles north of Delhi), while the Sikhs were halting at Ganaur (24 miles further north). He tried his level best to attack the Sikhs to Sindhia's interest, but to little interest.

About this time Sindhia was busy in the siege of Agra fort which surrendered on the 27th March. Thereafter, he wished to march to Delhi to compel the Sikhs to stop their marauding activities in the crown-lands. In the meanwhile, he issued pressing instructions to Ingle not to slacken his efforts in settling peace with Sikhs.

Ambaji continued his exertions for a peaceful settlement. He invited two Sikh chiefs Mohar Singh and Dulcha Singh to carry on talks on behalf of the Sikhs. After a long discussion the following agreement was arrived at: "These two Sardars would arrange a peace with the Sikhs. The agreement between the Sikhs and the Imperial Government that has continued since Najaf Khan's ministry is that the Sikhs would levy Rakhi (two annas in a rupee of revenue). This was continued till now. In future they are not to take Rakhi. They must meet Mahadji Sindhia and serve wherever he orders them."

Mohar Singh and Dulcha Singh went back and the Sikhs agreed to form a provisional treaty with Ambaji to see what concessions they could get from Mahadji's camp on the 27th March. Ambaji then visited the camp and on the 30th March, 1785 concluded the following provisional treaty with them:

"Between this party (Raja Ambaji) and the chiefs Baghel Singh

Bahadur, Karam Singh Bahadur, Dulcha Singh, Bhag Singh Dallewala, Mohar Singh and other chiefs of the Khalsai (the Sikh Government) in friendship with the above mentioned chiefs, unity of interests and of friendship has been established on oath, through the intervention of Maha Rao Partap Singh Bahadur. The friends and enemies, and the prosperity and adversity of each are equal. Not the smallest degree of jealousy or difference subsists between us and God is witness that there shall be no deviation.

"The Sikh Government from a consideration of the firm friendship that is established agree to forego their exactions of Rakhi and this party from the share he now takes in their interests, agrees to give himself in person or to depute some other to his master Mahadji Sindhia in order to promote the settlement of the objects of the Sikh chiefs in regard to a provision for their expenses and whatever may be settled by the Maharaja shall be only performed.

"Of whatever either on this side or that side of the Jamuna independent of the Royal Territories, may be taken in concert with each other from the Hindus and Musalmans, one third shall be given to the Sikh chiefs together with the other points settled for them.

"Marching and halting and other points, great and small, shall be settled with the mutual consent of the parties.

"The contracting parties shall unite their forces to repress any disturbances that may be excited by their enemies.

"Written on the 19th Jamadi-ul-Awwal of the 28th year of the reign corresponding with the 30th day of March 1785 A.D."<sup>1</sup>

The arrangement provided for the safety of the crown-lands situated between Delhi and Panipat and did not apply to the Gangetic Doab.<sup>2</sup>

This treaty (which was provisional) was disliked by the British. They saw in the materialization of this treaty a danger to the political interests of the East India Company and to the territories of their friend the Nawab Wazir of Oudh which was, for long, coveted by the Marathas. They, therefore, directed all their efforts towards the abrogation of this treaty. Anderson called on Mahadji Sindhia, to prevail upon him to so alter the treaty as

1. Delhi Yethil, i, 134, 157; C.P.C. vii, 212, Imperial Records, Secret Proceedings, 26th April, 1785.

2. *Decline and Fall of the Mughal Empire*, iii, p. 309.

to include therein the English and the Wazir as his friends and allies and also to alter the phrase regarding the conquests without specifying the territories on this or that side of the Jamuna (Anderson to Macpherson April 14, 28, 1785). In all this, Anderson put not only political pressure but also made a show of force through movements of the British army under Sir John Cumming.

A few days later Dulcha Singh paid a visit to the camp of Mahadji Sindhia and was surprised to find the change in the treaty and in the attitude of Sindhia. "His original proposals communicated to them verbally by Ambaji were that on relinquishing their demand of Rakhi, he could confer on them a Jagir of ten lacs annually, and that whatever territories they might jointly conquer, should be divided in a certain proportion between them (one third being the share of the Sikhs). In place of these terms, he now amended that they should relinquish their Rakhi, that they should unite their forces with him for the conquest of the territories of those Sikh chiefs with whom they were at variance that as he did not mean to take any share of the conquests himself, they should consider his cession of the whole as an equivalent for the Jagir, and that instead of general conquests (with particular reference to Aligarh) that he had proposed to them, he had now expressly excluded them from the territories of the Wazir and the company, with whom he was in strict friendship." Dulcha Singh was not prepared to agree to these amended terms. Mahadji, therefore, detained him in his camp till the signatures of the other Sardars had been put on this new definitive treaty.

### **The Definitive Treaty of 10th May, 1785**

The terms of the treaty as agreed upon between the contracting parties (Sikh Sardars and the Marathas) were as under :

The chiefs of the Khalsa with a force of 5000 horse being united in connection with the Sircar and the victorious army shall receive allowances and a Jagir of 10 lakhs of rupees according to the following particulars :

Of this Jagir 7½ lakhs of rupees are in the neighbourhood of Karnal, 2½ lakhs from the country of Sircar, and they shall attend in union, and besides these allowances and Jagir, the Sircar shall have authority over the whole dependency of Karnal and the country without interference. And if in the authority of the dependency, the authority (in consul) should be less than this

engagement, something shall, instead, therefore be granted from the Sircar.

In case the army of the said chiefs should be summoned to the Sircar before they have authority and possession in the Jagir, half a rupee shall be paid from the Sircar for each horseman after they be recorded. And after possession and full authority, no claim of pay for the sepoys shall be attended to.

For supporting themselves on Jagir and considering their union to be finer than a hair, let them employ themselves in the obedience to orders and let them prevent their people from taking the Rakhi in the circuit of the royal place and in possession of the Sircar and by no means let any disagreement remain in future.

I (Sindhia) am in friendship with the chiefs of the English company and with the Nawab Wazir, let there never be any injury offered to their country.

### **The Sikhs break away from the Marathas**

As it has been pointed out in the foregoing paragraphs, Dulcha Singh put his signature on the treaty under duress and immediately after the treaty was signed and he was free, he declared, "As they (Sikh Sardars) had discovered clearly the insidious scope of Sindhia's design, they were determined not to adhere to the treaty."<sup>1</sup> The other Sikh Sardars, on hearing of the treatment meted out to their ambassador Sardar Dulcha Singh, were greatly disconcerted and they decided to break away with Mahadji. A Sikh Vakil at the same time was sent to Lieutenant James Anderson, the British Resident with Sindhia to know the real intentions of the English in case of disagreement of the Sikh Sardars with Sindhia whether they would side with the Marathas or remain neutral. The Sikhs also made unsuccessful attempt to enter into a treaty with the British.

The British were happy at the changed attitude of the Sikhs, but at the same time they did not want to lose the Marathas, until they were very clear that Mahadji was hostile to them. This being so, they refused to conclude any treaty with the Sikhs, but at the same time, they assured them of their neutrality.

The policy, as the British calculated, was sure to foment disunity between the Marathas and the Sikhs with the result that

1. Anderson to Macpherson, May 10, 1785.



both the parties would be weakened.

It is pity that neither the brave Sikhs nor the Marathas could rise above the petty considerations to build all India Empire of their own. The indiscreet policy and unbecoming duplicity of Mahadji Sindhia caused an unhappy split between the Sikhs and the Marathas for some two decades to come and placed them in opposite camps to the ultimate advantage of the East India Company.

The Sikhs, who did not wish to abide by the treaty on account of the reason narrated above, started their depredations in the Doab and in the area around Delhi. Mahadji, on his part took steps to keep the Sikhs in check. He appointed several officers at various places to this effect. Shyam Rao Bakhshi was to take charge of the Panipat region. The districts of Saharanpur and Muzaffarnagar were given to Ram Rattan. Dhar Rao Sindhia was appointed the Subedar of the territory extending from Mathura and Aligarh to Karnal and Saharanpur. These officers exerted their best, to overawe the Sikhs not to carry inroads into Doab and Karnal region, but they did not succeed in their purpose. On the other hand, the Sikh raids so affected the Marathas that Mahadji found it imperative to go to the Imperial capital to protect it from the Sikhs (November, 1785).

### **Marathas help the Patiala Raja (December 1785—January 1786)**

Almost simultaneous to the above happenings, internecine warfare was going on between Raja Sahib Singh of Patiala and Khushal Singh of the Singhpuria Misl. Nanu Mal, Diwan of Patiala, with the consent of Bibi Rajinder Kaur (a grand-daughter of Ala Singh) who had come to help her minor nephew Maharaja Sahib Singh (born 1773, ruled 1782—1813) sought the assistance of the Marathas to reconquer lost villages. But the price they had to pay was very heavy indeed not only in cash which amounted to five lakhs of rupees but also in pointing to them the way to the territories of Patiala and other Sikh chiefs.

The Sikhs in general went on harassing the Marathas by committing raids into the territory of Doab which was under their control. They also wrote friendly letters to Jahandar Shah and the Governor-General (January, 1787) obviously to put pressure on the Marathas. In February 1787, they plundered the territory of Ghulam Qadir who had gone to Delhi to seek assistance from Sindhia in

case of an attack of the Sikhs. The Ruhilla chief had to purchase peace by giving them their share of Rakhi.

### **Ambaji Expedition to Panipat (February, 1787 A.D.)**

In order to divert the attention of the Sikhs and to enable Ghulam Qadir to comply with his wishes, Sindhia sent Ambaji Ingle, one of his best officers, to proceed at the head of a considerable force towards Panipat. He was required to win over the Sikhs not to attack the crown lands and to step their incursions into the Doab. Ambaji left Delhi on the 15th February, 1787. He did his best to win over the Sikhs but could not gain any substantial success. In fact, Sikh Sardars such as Karam Singh and Gurdit Singh were determined to oppose him; Baghel Singh, however, was the first Sikh chief who agreed to join Ambaji with 1000 horses.

In May 1787, Mahadji Sindhia instructed Ambaji to penetrate into the Sikh territory as far as Patiala and to levy tribute from all the chiefs of the cis-Sutlej territory on behalf of his master as Regent plenipotentiary of the Mughal Emperor.

Ambaji, in accordance with the instructions of Mahadji, proceeded to accomplish his task. He pushed on towards Thanesar. On the way he did not experience any opposition from the Sikhs. At Thanesar, he received orders from Mahadji Sindhia not to proceed further and to join him at Lalsot where he was engaged in life and death struggle against the Raja of Jaipur. The Maratha general was in sore need of money. Besides this, he was not prepared to beat a hasty retreat for fear of displaying the weakness of the Marathas. So he suppressed these letters and continued his advance. He penetrated as far as Ghuram, sixteen miles from Patiala. Here his unwilling companion, Ghulam Qadir left his camp. Ghulam Qadir took this decision under the pressure of Sardar Baghel Singh and other Sikh Sardars who had been the friends and protectors of his father. Ambaji also now came to know of the presence in Sikh camp of an agent from Jaynagar (Jaipur) inviting them to join an anti-Sindhia confederacy of the Rajputs and pressing them to attack him.

This unnerved the Maratha general and for fear of the destruction of the force, Ambaji beat a hasty retreat on June 7 and returned to Karnal on his way to join his master at Lalsot.

The first of August 1787 was a day of unique importance in the history of the Marathas. On this day, Mahadji Sindhia was

forced to beat a hasty retreat while fighting against the Raja of Jaipur. "The news of it", says Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar "at once shivered his newly built and ill-knit dominion into a hundred fragments. A world of enemies raised their heads against him—rivals for his position as Imperial Regent, heirs of old houses whom he had dispossessed, Hindustani officers whose vast alienations of crown-lands (worth 70 lakhs of rupees a year) he had taken back, greedy old courtiers whose perquisites and corrupt influence he had curbed and the entire north-Indian Muslim society to whom the regency of a Hindu was an abomination."<sup>1</sup>

Among the first to throw off allegiance to Sindhia was Ghulam Qadir Ruhilla. He strengthened his military position by compelling all his Jagirdars to supply him with troops. Then he put his whole army into motion with a view to over-running all the Marathas and to have control of Delhi. In this project he succeeded to enlist the help of the Sikh Sardars. The Emperor tried to incite them against Ghulam Qadir and to over-run his territories, but nothing came out of his attempts. At one time, the Emperor asked the Sikh Sardars to ravage the Ghulam Qadir's territory, he also issued instructions to Baghel Singh to act as his plenipotentiary and collect tribute on his behalf. But the Sikhs did not respond to it favourably, on the other hand, on the 15th September, Baghel Singh and Gurdit Singh informed him that as Sindhia had not cared for them, they unwillingly had opted to side with Ghulam Qadir. In August-September, 1787, the Sikhs and Ghulam Qadir advanced upon Delhi. The Maratha contingent led by Madho Rao Phadke worsted the Sikhs, although Delhi was not captured. In August 1788, Delhi was captured by Ghulam Qadir resulting in the overthrow of his power in northern India. Mahadji soon regained his lost prestige in October 1788 when Rane Khan re-conquered Delhi (October 11, 1788). Ghulam Qadir did his best to resist but to no avail. He was, at last hunted down, captured, blinded and finally murdered on March 3, 1789. His mother, wife and brother sought protection of the Khalsa which was readily given.

This act of the Khalsa was great morally speaking; but it inflamed Sindhia. Moreover he felt that the treasure which they had carried away from Ghausgarh belonged to him as a conqueror. Besides this he thought it a sacred duty to bring all the territories back under the control of the Emperor.

1. J.N. Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Vol. III, p. 393.

This being so, he launched expedition under Rane Khan against the Sikhs. In December 1788, they crossed the Jamuna to Kunjpura and threatened to invade Patiala. A sum of fifty thousand rupees was paid to them to avert the threat but it only served as an appetiser. This alarmed the other Sikh chiefs, and Sardar Baghel Singh Karor Singhia invited the Dal Khalsa from across the Sutlej.

The Marathas were pushed on to Thanesar where they were harassed by Baghel Singh and compelled to leave the place. From Thanesar, Rane Khan sent advance guard under Kashi Rao and Balaji Ingle. In April 1789, these forces were repulsed by Sikh Sardars such as Tara Singh Ghaiba. Diwan Nanu Mal of Patiala wished to buy off the Marathas with another payment. Bibi Rajinder Kaur refused to entertain such an idea, as she disliked the policy of appeasement of the Marathas. Nanu Mal turned disloyal and openly went over to the Marathas. This act of Nanu Mal egged on the Maratha General Jiva Dada Bakhshi to march on the village of Suhlar within two miles of the town and fort of Patiala. But the Patiala princess remained unshaken and stoutly opposed the Marathas.

Not successful in exacting money from the princess, the Marathas moved to Saifabad where Gulab Kali, a mistress of the late Maharaja Amar Singh resided and who had refused to give money to the Marathas. According to Dr. H.R. Gupta, this expedition was undertaken at the suggestion of Diwan Nanu Mal. Gulab Kali offered stout resistance, and when her ammunition stores were exhausted, she used silver bullets by melting rupees.

In the meantime, Maratha troops were laying waste the Patiala territory. Bibi Rajinder Kaur a lady of great ability, daughter of Raja Bhumia Singh, and a cousin of Raja Amar Singh, could not tolerate the ruin of her subjects resulting from this warfare. At the head of military guard she left Patiala and came to Suhlar where Rane Khan was halting. She prevailed upon the Maratha General to retire promising to pay the tribute after personally settling the amount of it with Mahadji Sindhia who was encamped at Mathura. The Marathas then commenced their return march with Bibi Rajinder Kaur in their train. In this way Maratha expedition under Rane Khan failed to achieve any of his cherished objectives. He could not exact any tribute from the Patiala and other Sikh chiefs. Rajinder Kaur returned to Patiala in 1790 and died in 1791.

Another attempt, in a big way was made in A.D. 1791 to deter the Sikhs from carrying their inroads into the Doab as also to put

pressure on them to pay tribute. In 1792, Gopal Rao Raghunath, the Sindhia's governor of northern provinces took up the project of teaching a lesson to the Sikhs who had been constantly conducting raids into Gangetic Doab. He, to accomplish his project set free Bibi Rajinder Kaur and asked Sahib Singh of Patiala to render help to him. According to Dr. Hari Ram Gupta, Sahib Singh at once made preparations to leave as the head of a force. The Sikhs who had just returned from the Doab and who did not like the policy of Raja Sahib Singh besieged Patiala and stopped any reinforcement going to Kanaud. The Marathas, however, wanted to punish the Sikhs, but Gopal Rao was not prepared to advance into the heart of the Sikh territory. Even after getting monetary aid from Mahadji Sindhia he did not muster courage to march upon them, although he spent a couple of months on the border of the Sikh country.

Mahadji Sindhia died on February 12, 1794 at Poona to which place he had returned from the north early in 1792.

Daulat Rao Sindhia, the successor of Mahadji Lakba Dada succeeded Gopal Rao in November 1794 in the administration of Maratha possession in northern India. His prime function, he felt, was to curb the rising power of the Sikhs. With this end in view, he marched northward with about twenty thousand soldiers. From Karnal he seems to have been accompanied by two Maratha captains Anta Rao and Lakshman Rao. On the way, small chieftains, offered submission. Bibi Sahib Kaur, the Prime Minister of the ruler of Patiala (Sahib Singh) preferred to settle the issues in the battlefield. She lost no time to form a league of the neighbouring chiefs, that is to say Bhag Singh of Jind, Bhanga Singh and Mehtab Singh of Thanesar, etc. and with their combined forces estimated at about 7000, she rushed forth to check the advance of the Marathas.

The two armies came face to face near Maidanpur (south of Shambhu) a few miles to the north-west of Ambala. As the battle ensued, the Sikh soldiers began to waver. At this critical juncture, Sahib Kaur, true to the tradition of the Khalsa, stepped down from her chariot and with a drawn sword in her hand, called upon her disheartened troops to pick up courage, "Soldiers of the Patiala state," she exclaimed, "you will be for ever disgraced if you fly and allow a woman and a sister of your chief to be slain, for I am determined never to retreat."

This stepped up the spirit of the soldiers who led such a



forceful attack that the Marathas were thrown into confusion. The Marathas suffered no great loss, although its moral effect was very great and in the words of John J. Pool, "With mingled feelings of fear and respect, they turned their faces homeward and gave up the expedition. The Patiala was saved by the skill and daring of Ranee Sahib Kaur."

After this, practically no other attempt was made by the Maratha general against the Sikhs. In 1795, Nana Rao was assigned the duty of realising revenue from the cis-Sutlej Sikhs. He proceeded to accomplish his task. He asked Bhanga Singh at Thanesar to pay tribute which he simply refused. Gulsher Khan suggested to Nana Rao that he was prepared to pay Rs. 5000 if Maratha chief would secure him the possession of Biana (16 miles north of Karnal) a place under Bhanga Singh. Karam Singh, Nirmala, Gurdit Singh, Jodh Singh Kalsia and Rai Singh Bhanga were also asked to pay tribute. Lal Singh of Kaithal was also asked for the payment of tribute. All these Sardars gave evasive and illusive replies. Nana Rao had to fight a fierce battle with Bhanga Singh of Thanesar who was weakened, no doubt, but did not submit.

Nana Rao then tried to get some money from Patiala and despatched Gurdit Singh, Karam Singh and Bakht Singh. The Raja won over Nana's agent and advised them to put Maratha general off. He raised the strength of the army under his sister Sahib Kaur to five thousand horses. Bhanga Singh and Mehtab Singh continued their attacks on the Maratha camp. The Sikh chiefs waited upon Nana Rao and declared that the situation was growing from bad to worse every hour as the trans-Sutlej Sikhs were pouring into Patiala to assist the Raja. Some other Sikh messengers also corroborated the news.

Nana was not to be deceived so easily. At the head of 12,000 picked soldiers, he moved towards Patiala. Sahib Singh came out to oppose him on the banks of Ghaggar, but the Sikhs were repulsed. Then the Sikhs attacked the Maratha advance-guard led by Madho Rao Phalke but once again, they could not achieve any success.

Nana Rao who was tired of this useless fighting decided to retire to Delhi and marched back to Delhi (October 1795).

The above narrative of Sikh-Maratha relations brings into focus very many important facts. Firstly, it showed that the Sikhs who had waged a relentless war first against the Mughals and then



against the Afghans to free the Punjab from their yoke and this being so only if they could have joined hands, they might have given a very sound political structure to the country. But this did not happen and surely this thing was a sad commentary on the political genius of the Indians.

The Marathas became agent of the Mughal Empire. They had no other laudable object except exacting money for themselves and for Mughal Emperor. Sindhia's or his agent's campaigns in the northern India and in the cis-Sutlej areas were bereft of any higher political purpose. With the Marathas casting their greedy eyes upon their territories either for themselves or on behalf of the Mughals, the Sikhs had at times to seek and contract alliance and treaties with the Ruhillas, the Jats and the Rajputs and even the East India Company. And whenever an occasion for them to take the Maratha side, as equals, came, they never threw it away. They welcomed it. But whenever the Marathas tried to take possession of their country or to reduce them, they could not allow the Punjab to be occupied by the Marathas. As a matter of fact, the Sikhs were determined to establish their own rule in this land and naturally they could ill-brook any one putting obstacles on their way. The Marathas should have understood this fact and shape their policies accordingly. They, themselves, had suffered a lot and waged a fierce struggle to snatch independence from the Mughal Emperor, and this being so, they should have respected the sentiments of the Sikhs. Had there been any statesman of calibre and foresight, either among them or among the Sikhs, a solution might have been found and both of them might have entered into some sort of federation or confederation to give lead to the country to higher destiny. Both the people had profound philosophies to inspire them and to develop all-India vision; but alas, both these people did not act properly. The Sikhs had declared themselves to be independent of the Mughal Emperor and refused to pay any tribute to him or acknowledge his authority. Mahadji Sindhia, as his regent, on the other hand, wished to re-establish the Mughal rule over their freed country. Obviously the Sikhs were the last persons to tolerate it.

## Chapter 19

# BRITISH IMPERIALISM AND THE SIKHS

A study of the Anglo-Sikh relations in the eighteenth century is significant from the point of view of understanding their relations in the nineteenth century, as according to N.K. Sinha, "The relations between these growing powers in the 18th century must have contained germs out of which their mutual relations sprouted into full bloom in the 19th century."

Anglo-Sikh relations in the eighteenth century were concerned mainly with the cis-Sutlej states vis-a-vis the British Indian Government. The reason for this is not far to seek. The trans-Sutlej Sikh Misls had not much to do with the powers of Hindustan, as they were interested more in the consolidation and securing of their conquests on other side of the river. In this context and extract from the British record amply manifests the centre of the activities of those Sardars. "The Sikhs in Lahore and Multan form together a very respectable power..... They are prevented by necessity of watching the motives of each other from attempting to extend their conquests. The Sikh chiefs immediately to the north-ward of Delhi are totally un-connected with these and are in fact nothing more than a number of petty plunderers."<sup>1</sup>

The relations between the Sikhs and the British Government began first in April, 1783. In March, 1783, the Sikhs advanced upon Delhi and practically faced no opposition. A settlement was reached between the Sikhs and the Delhi Court. The Sikhs received a cash present of three lakhs of rupees, while Baghel Singh built Gurdwaras such as Gurdwara Teliwara in memory of the Mothers Sundari and Sahib Devi, Gurdwara Bangla Sahib, Gurdwara Rakab Ganj and Gurdwara Sis Ganj.

Even after retirement from Delhi, the Sikhs left their Vakil Lakhpat Rai in the Imperial capital to watch the interests of the

1. Extract from Secret Consultation, 24th November, 1786, No. 6.

Sikhs. At this time, he opened diplomatic correspondence with James Browne, the British agent and the Minister at the court of Delhi. He wrote a letter to Browne stating that Jassa Singh Ahluwalia "who is the highest and greatest and in that country called Badshah" and Baghel Singh including many others were willing to establish friendly relations with the British Government.

What exactly were the motives behind this diplomatic move is not clear, yet it can be surmised that the Sikhs wanted to have upper hand at Delhi, free-land in Indo-Gangetic Doab and unrestricted entry into the dominion of Nawab Wazir of Oudh. In one of the letters of Lakhpat Rai the objections of the Sikhs are dealt with. He states in reply to one of the letters of Mr. Browne, "The population and tranquility of the people and arrangement of the affairs of the Empire were the chief desires of the Sikhs. He declared that their presence in the Gangetic Doab was due to the fact that the Sardars of Hindustan do not abide by their engagements. He suggested that their friendship with the British Government would result in an amicable settlement of such affairs. The Sikhs were particularly interested in the friendship of the British because firstly this was the only power which could hamper them from organising inroads into the Indo-Gangetic Doab and secondly Marathas would think twice to work vigorously in favour of the restoration of the Mughal rule in cis-Sutlej territory and Indo-Gangetic Doab to which they were committed. The Sikhs at this stage had no plan to conquer Delhi or to establish an Indian Rule.

As a matter of fact, upto this time, neither the Marathas nor the Sikhs entertained the vision of All-India Rule. The Marathas were working, theoretically speaking, for the Mughal Emperor and the Sikhs were trying that Mughal Rule should not be established in view of its tyranny which it had let loose on the Sikhs only a few years back.

Browne was not prepared to enter into any treaty of friendship with the Sikhs. Two things seemed to have been lurking in his mind. In the first instance he was instinctively against the Sikh's because of their pre-occupation with plunder and devastation. He expressed this view in reply to the letter of Lehna Singh, one of the Lahore chiefs. He said, "Several of your Sardars have contracted the bad habit of plunder and devastation, and boasted of their opposition and rebellion to His Majesty and nobles

of the presence."<sup>1</sup> He expressed similar views in his letters to Baghel Singh and Sahib Singh of Patiala also.

Secondly, he did not consider it advisable to annoy Shah Alam or the Marathas. Browne in his reply dated 27th April, 1783 to Lakhpat Rai's letter held out prospects of 'sincere friendship' on the condition of obedience to Shah Alam II and laying aside the practice of plundering the Gangetic Doab and the crown-lands."<sup>2</sup>

There is no doubt that the Sikh initiative failed, yet it focussed the attention of the British to pay due attention to the rising power of the Sikhs just near Delhi.

The Sikhs conducted their raid in the Doab in January-February, 1784 with greater vigour. This time, they were led by Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and Karam Singh. The Delhi court was much perturbed. Abdul Ahad Khan wrote to Zafaryab Khan (step-son of Begam Samru), who was encamped at Serai Ruhilla to stay there, and not to march to Sardhana. He appointed two companies at the Najib battalions with two pieces of cannon to guard the Kashmiri Gate of the city.<sup>3</sup>

The presence of the Sikhs in the Doab created uneasiness in the mind of Major James Browne. He had aimed at seizing the Imperial capital for the British. He now felt that the Sikhs would, by capturing Delhi, frustrate his own designs. His anxiety in this context was visible in the letter which he addressed to the Governor-General (5th February, 1784) in which he stated, "The great army of the Sikhs having entered Zabita Khan's country which is just from where they may seize on the capital and plunder all the royal land in the space of a few days" was assuring a threatening attitude.

It was difficult for Browne to restrain his anger at the attack of the Sikhs on the Doab. He gave vent to his feelings when he met Kalayan Singh, the son of Karam Singh. He asked him what were the wishes and expectations of the Sikh Sardars that they had already in the course of a few years made themselves masters of a large and valuable country in the possession of which no one annoys them but their present expedition seemed to indicate that

- 
1. Refer to H.R. Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. II, p. 145.
  2. James Browne Despatches 1783 to 1785; Imperial Records, Foreign Department 41A, Nos. 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27-29; CPC, vii, 315 (13, 14, 17-27, 47).
  3. *Selections from Calcutta Gazette*, i, pp. 10, 11, 13.

they were yet unsatisfied and mean to render themselves a terror and a nuisance to their neighbours without any occupation on their part. He added if they continued doing so "It would provoke a general union of such power as were fully adequate to chastise unbridled insolence and unprovoked invasion." He further stated that "By the newspapers he perceived the Sikh Sardars talked of laying waste the country of the Wazir as if their doing so were an act entirely at their own command and in which no one could molest them. He would assume that the English Government would resent an attack on Ruhilkhand on some degree as attack on Bengal."<sup>1</sup> To this Kalayan Singh gave a brief reply that Karam Singh out of regard for his friendship with Browne had persuaded the other Sikh Sardars, though with great difficulty, not to cross the Ganges into the territory of the Nawab of Oudh, an ally of the British.<sup>2</sup>

Browne now decided to translate his plans of the occupation of Delhi into execution. He wanted to win over the Sikhs to the side of the British and for this purpose he despatched a Punjabi Khatri with twenty messengers to Jai Singh Kanhiya. He suggested that out of the conquered territories, five-eighths would go to the English while the three-eighths to the Sikhs. Delhi, however, will be occupied by the British alone.

This move, being independent of any instruction from the Governor-General, Warren Hastings, did not succeed, particularly when the policy of the latter was quite different from the proposed or thought out by Major Browne, Governor-General's policy at this stage was to be only watchful of the developments taking place at Delhi. He advised that every effort should be made that no treaty of friendship was made between the Sikhs and the Mughal Emperor. He, however, was sure that there was no immediate prospect of any disturbances from that quarter, as the chiefs of the Sikhs who were some time ago expected to move this way, had now retired to their own country.<sup>3</sup>

He, in fact, wanted to check the Sikh aggression instead of seizing Delhi because in that case the responsibility of safeguarding the interests of the Mughal Emperor or of the British from the Sikh aggression would fall on the British for whom it would

1. Imperial Records, Foreign Department letters to and from Major Browne and Warren Hastings, 41A No. 45; Secret Proceedings, 11th May 1784, pp. 1096-100.

2. Dr. H.R. Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, p. 159.

3. Imperial Records, Secret Proceedings, 11th May, 1784, pp. 1083-84.

be a difficult task firstly because their headquarter was far away from Delhi and secondly it might bring about a union between the Marathas and the Sikhs. Warren Hastings, therefore, suggested that assistance should be given to Prince Jahandar in his project of crushing the Sikhs if he applied for it with the authority of the Emperor and the concurrence of the Marathas.<sup>1</sup>

The plan of Warren Hastings to crush the Sikhs failed for various reasons. In the first place, the Prince was incapable for executing such projects. Secondly, Warren Hastings had not sufficient means at his disposal to check the progress of the Sikhs. Thirdly, Sindhia was not likely to allow passage through Gangetic Doab over which he practically ruled. Lastly, the Emperor would never have consented to place his rebel son in command of the expedition.

What was the position of the Sikhs from the point of view of the growing British power can be visualized very nicely from the study of the observations recorded by Bussy, a very important and intelligent French official in French East India Company.

He records, "The Sikhs pass for very brave men and it is the general opinion among the Mughals that none but the Sikhs and Marathas can turn the English out of Bengal, the former by attacking the country on the left bank of the Ganges and the Marathas on the right bank. It is not believed that the Sikhs have an alliance with the English."<sup>2</sup>

Mahadji Sindhia, the nominal slave but the rigid master of Shah Alam II, was from 1784 to 1789, the practical ruler of the region from the Sutlej to Agra. He suffered a temporary eclipse in 1786-88, but very soon regained his authority. The Sikhs did not like the advancement of the Marathas. Sindhia on his part had learnt that since it was not possible to subdue them, it was advisable to arrive into some sort of settlement with them. To this errand, Mahadji Sindhia sent pressing instruction to Ingle not to slacken his efforts in setting peace terms with the Sikhs. Ambaji Ingle continued his exertion and on the 30th March, 1785 A.D., he was successful in prevailing upon the Sikhs to make peace with the Sindhia.

---

1. For details refer to Imperial Records, Secret Proceedings, 14th December, 1784, pp. 537-44.

2. Modern Review, 1925, A Singaravelu "Disunited India as seen by a Foreign Eye" as quoted in *Rise of the Sikh Power* by N.K. Sinha.



A provisional Treaty was concluded between the Sikhs and the Sindhia on 30th March, 1785. According to the treaty the following decisions were arrived at :

- (1) Both the parties would respect each other and no one will entertain any jealousy or difference for the other.
- (2) The Sikh Government from a consideration of the firm friendship that is established agree to forego their exactions of 'Rakhi' and this party from the share he now takes in their interest agrees to go himself in person or to depute some other to his master the Maharaja (Sindhia) in order to promote the settlement for the objects of the Sikh chiefs in regard to a provision for their expenses etc., and whatever may be settled by the Maharaja shall be duly performed.
- (3) Whatever, on this side or that side of the Jamuna, may be taken in concern with each other from the Hindus and Musalmans, one-third shall be given to the Sikh chiefs together with the other points settled for them.
- (4) The contracting parties shall unite their forces to repress any disturbances that may be excited by their enemies.
- (5) Marching and halting and other points, great and small, shall be settled with the mutual consent of the parties.<sup>1</sup>

The Sikhs were almost satisfied with the type of treaty but before this treaty was given definitive form, it was changed under the pressure of the British. The British resident with Sindhia and at Lucknow saw in the materialization of this treaty, a danger to the political interests of the East India Company and to the territories of their friend, the Nawab Wazir of Oudh. They, therefore, directed all their efforts towards its nullification by whatever means it could be brought about. Under instructions from his Principals, James Anderson called on Mahadji Sindhia and with the fullest political pressure of the government of the East India Company and of the movements of a force under Col. Sir John Cumming prevailed upon him to so alter the treaty as to

---

1. Delhi Yethil i 134, 157; Calendar of Private Correspondence vii 212; Imperial Records, Secret Proceedings, 26th April, 1785.

include therein, "The English and the Wazir as his friends and allies", and also to alter the phrase regarding the conquests without specifying the territories "on this or that side of the Jamuna."

A few days later when Sardar Dulcha Singh visited the camp of Mahadji Sindhia, as arranged, to settle personally on behalf of the Khalsaji, the various points in connection with the treaty, he was surprised to find the change in the treaty and in the attitude of Mahadji. He showed his unwillingness to agree to the amended terms; but Mahadji detained him in his camp till the signatures of other Sardars had been subscribed to the new definitive treaty. The Sikhs smelt instantaneously the insidious designs of Mahadji Sindhia which were just to lull them to sleep for the time being and then after consolidating his position to strike them hard. He had no laudable aim of establishing a good government on all-India basis, his objective was obviously limited and circumscribed.

This being so, a Sikh Vakil was at once sent to Lt. Col. James Anderson the British Resident with Sindhia to know the real intentions of the English in case of disagreement of the Sikh Sardars with Sindhia, because Sindhia had given out evidently to over-awe them into submission, that in that case, the English would join with him against the Sikhs. As in the opinion of James Anderson, agreeable to the view of his masters, it was more favourable to the interests of the company that they should continue to be dis-united, he directed his Maulvi to inform the Sikh Vakil "that the Seik chiefs may rest perfectly assured that it is not our intention to take any part with him (Sindhia) against them." The other Sikh Sardars also decided to break away with Mahadji as they found Sindhia indulging in duplicity.

The treaty was never observed by the contracting parties and hence it had practically no effect except that it caused an unhappy split between the Sikhs and the Marathas for some two decades to come to place them in opposite camps to the ultimate advantage of the East India Company. The Sikh chiefs made many overtures to enter into a treaty of friendships with the British; but the latter did not agree. They simply made vague assurances and those too to foment disputes between the Marathas and the Sikhs. As a matter of fact, the British at this stage did not want to offend Sindhia. Anderson's views on this subject leave no doubt regarding the British policy towards the Sikhs.

"The English and Sindhia are certainly connected in the

---

1. Dr. Ganda Singh, 'The Maratha-Sikh Relations' from *Punjab, Past and Present*. Vol. I, ii, p. 325.

firmest friendship but that the Seik Chiefs may rest perfectly assured that it is not our intention to take any part with him against them; that in regard to an intercourse of friendship by letters between them and our government I think it extremely proper and should be happy to be the channel of conducting it."<sup>1</sup>

Another Sikh Vakil named Seva Singh waited upon Colonel Sir John Cumming with letters from Gurdit Singh, Baghel Singh, Man Singh and others, and expressed his apprehensions at Sindhia's ambitious designs in which he declared the British Government was also a party. Cumming tried to remove the misunderstanding: "I, therefore, told the Seik Vakeel that though our Government is resolved to adhere to the treaty with the Marathas yet we are under no engagements to assist in promoting their ambitious views; and that under no circumstance would we aid them against the Seik provided the latter made no incursions into our ally the Wazir's country."

The British authorities, as it would be clear from foregoing paragraphs, were not prepared to offend Sindhia and in a way they were satisfied with the treaty as James Anderson stated, "In other respects, I expressed myself much pleased with this treaty since it effectually secured the Wazir's dominions against any future inroads from the Seiks; seeing that in the present state of their connection, no incursion could henceforth be made without his knowledge and consent."

In January 1791, an event took place which might have brought about a change in the attitude of the British towards the Sikhs, had the British not kept restraint and statesman-like patience. The Sikhs numbering 1000 men under the leadership of Bhanga Singh appeared on the Ganges. They as a rule concentrated their attention on the Maratha country alone plundering two or three villages belonging to the Wazir. The Governor-General expressed his gratification at the abstention of the Sikhs from extending depredations to the Wazir's territory and clear instructions were issued to Colonel Stuart the in-charge of the post of Anup Shahar not to offer any cause for provocation.

The instructions of the Governor-General were carried out generally but on the 3rd January, the Sikhs heard that an English man was riding alone. Some of the daring Sikh youths out of mere adventure fell upon him and took him prisoner. He was Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Stuart. Captain Bradley his assistant,

1. *Imperial Records, Secret Proceedings*, 3rd May, 1785, pp. 1373-85.

tried to effect his escape with the assistance of a detachment consisting of two companies; but the Sikhs could not be pursued for want of Cavalry with the result that they entered into the Maratha districts into which the British troops could not be led without the previous sanction of Mahadji Sindhia, the chief of that country. Bhanga Singh crossed over the Jamuna and imprisoned Colonel Stuart in the fort of Thanesar. The Colonel was well treated by the Sikhs.

Even then, he, as it was natural to him, wanted to get his release. He managed to write a letter to Bradley asking him to put pressure upon Nawab Faizullah Khan of Rampur to secure his release through the intercession of northern Ruhilla chiefs of Muzaffar Nagar and Saharanpur districts.

The Nawab Wazir of Oudh was in favour of quick despatch of a force against the Sikhs. He suggested that course not only to secure the release of Colonel Stuart but also in revenge for the insult of taking him and for the damage they had done to his district. Edward Otto Ives, the British Resident of Oudh, did not approve of this course because there was the danger "of irritating the Sikhs so as to convert what are now only incidental and partial incursions for plunder into a settled enmity and systematic desire to distress his Excellency's country."<sup>1</sup> The matter was reported to the Governor-General. He also dittoed Otto Ives and expressed that army provocation from the British troops to these free-booters, might, however slight, have the effects of inducing them to extend their depredations from the Maratha districts to those of his Excellency's, although they should not previously have entertained any such hostile designs. The Board of Directors also agreed to the view of Mr. Otto and that of the Governor-General.

Edward Otto Ives wrote friendly letters to Bhanga Singh, and attempted to give him an impression that the Sardar was not at all responsible for the Colonel's capture, but he was apprehended by a party of straggling Sikhs. It was their hope that the Colonel must have been set at liberty long before this letter reached him, promising that they would inform the Governor-General of his friendly behaviour towards the Colonel. Bhanga Singh's reply was couched in the same diplomatic language. He made profession of friendship but did not mention a word about restoring the Colonel to liberty.

This line was also adopted by Governor-General who in his

1. Dr. H.R. Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. II.

letter to Bhanga Singh expressed similar friendly views (7th March, 1791), and offered to purchase horses from his territory on the terms to be decided between him and the Colonel.

At the suggestion of Nawab Wazir of Oudh, Rai Singh, the chief of Buriya was engaged to persuade Bhanga Singh to release the Colonel whom Bhanga Singh told explicitly that he would not release him without getting ransom.

Warren Hastings the Governor-General, disdainfully rejected the aforesaid terms, but then he ultimately agreed to do. As a matter of fact, the British, at this stage did not want to pick up quarrel with the Sikhs who in their views had no concerted plan to organise inroads into British territory or that of their ally, the Nawab Wazir of Oudh.

Bhanga Singh was offered Rs. 20000 to release the Colonel, but the Sikh chief demanded one lakh of rupees. In the end Rs. 60000 were paid to him through Begam Samru and the Colonel was set free on the 24th October, 1791.

The issue of Colonel Stuart did strain the Anglo-Sikh relations, but its impact was very little.

During Sir John Shore's time the Sikhs sought the permission of the Nawab Wazir of Oudh to visit Nanakmata, a hallowed place of pilgrimage of the Sikhs. In June, 1795 their leaders, Jai Singh, Tara Singh and Baghel Singh applied to Rai Shambhu Nath, the *Amil* of Bareilly, for permission to go on pilgrimage to Nanakmata.

Shambhu Nath forwarded this letter to the Nawab of Oudh who, framed a reply in close consultation of Mr. C.F. Cherry, the British Resident at Lucknow and then sent it to the Sikhs. The reply meant to evade the issue for the time being in the hope that mutual dissensions of the Sikhs would engross them in such a way that they would automatically be prevented from putting up such a demand.

When Sir John Shore came to know the contents of the reply, he objected to it. He expressed that the Sikhs should have been told expressly that they would not be allowed to visit the place, accompanied by forces in such a large number. He further pointed out that the reply already sent to the Sikhs had promise of future permission to perform their pilgrimage to Nanakmata implied in it. The Governor-General added that in the reply, the Nawab should have written :

"That considering the friendship which has so long subsisted between the Sikh Sardars and His Excellency and his sincere desire to cultivate it he cannot observe without surprise that an

application to pass through his territories on a pilgrimage to Nanakmata is accompanied with an express determination to proceed there at all events. That is a declaration so unusual between friends must impose upon His Excellency, his acquiescence to their application and at all events previous to a compliance with it, he should think it necessary to consult the English Government with which he is closely allied and in the habit of communicating upon all occasions."<sup>1</sup>

As the Ganges was in spate in June, 1795 the Sikhs dropped the idea of crossing the river and shortly afterwards retired to their own country.

Soon after the coming of Lord Cornwallis to India, a Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief, there was a proposal for raising a body of Sikh cavalry to fight in the Carnatic in the event of a war, but this was dropped because it was doubtful whether a sufficient number could be levied and if levied, their obedience and fidelity could be relied upon.<sup>2</sup>

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, Zaman Shah, the king of Kabul, talked of emulating the example of his grandfather, and of attacking Punjab and Delhi to establish his supremacy in this sub-continent. The predominant powers in India felt concerned at the move of Shah Zaman. Since the Sikhs were guarding the north-western frontier, they all at once leapt into prominence in British records. Since Shah Zaman created a stir in India, there was brisk correspondence between the cis-Sutlej Sikh chiefs and the British Resident in Oudh or in the camp of Daulat Rao Sindhia, the successor of Mahadji Sindhia. Rai Singh, the chief of Buriya wrote to the British authorities suggesting them to evolve a system of mutual cooperation against the common enemy. Jassa Singh Ramgarhia also wrote to the British Resident at Lucknow in the same strain. Lord Wellesley proposed a league with the Rajputs, the Marathas and the Sikhs. This proposal could not be put into effect because Shah Zaman could not penetrate deep into India because of troubles at home. Had Zaman Shah succeeded in advancing further into India, Anglo-Sikh Relations might have taken a new turn, and in that case, there was a possibility of the growth of cordial understanding between the Sikh Confederation and the British Government.

---

1. Dr. H.R. Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. II.

2. Copy of a Paper written in persuance of a desire expressed by Lord Cornwallis and delivered to Colonel Ross, October 17, 1787.



**WHAT HAPPENED  
TO SIKHISM**

Eighteenth Century was a period of great significance in the growth of Sikhism. The Sikhs came out with flying colours in their grim struggle for assertion, identity, recognition and sovereignty. They showed enviable creativeness in evolving new strategies and new institutions such as Misdari, Dal Khalsa, Rakhi and Gurmata etc. to cope with different challenges. They developed the theories and traditions of Sikh Heroism and Sikh Martyrdom. Moreover, they strove hard to make the idea of Panth-Guru as an integral part of Sikh psyche. Sikh prayer as an institution and a concept came into being and the primacy of Amritsar and Harimandir was established. Such things were obviously no mean achievements.

But in spite of all this, all did not go well for Sikhism. The eighteenth century, indeed, was not a period of unmixed blessings. The institution of Gurdwara fell into the hands of the Hindu priests or those who were nurtured in Hindu traditions with the result that the institution, which not only educated the people in Sikh teachings but also presented an ideal pattern of Sikh way of life began to function like a Hindu temple and Sikhism was projected as only a part of Hinduism—at best its militant arm. 'Sangat' as an institution was not allowed to play its destined part. Sikhism lost its appeal, as its stance was projected in distorted form. Once again caste considerations began to stalk the Sikh society. New caste hierarchy came into being thereby harming the cause of the Panthic solidarity, the concept and reality, so assiduously nurtured and sustained by the Gurus and their followers. The Sikh orders such as Udasis and Nirmalas with the exception of Gianies also degenerated into the willing instrument of the forces spelling degeneration among Sikhism. In the economic sphere too, when the Sikhs came to settling down, they established themselves as a class of peasant proprietors or as feudal chieftains—the development which clashed with the egalitarian spirit of Sikhism.

## Chapter 20

# SIKH HEROISM— CONCEPT AND TRADITION

Sikhism, besides enunciating the truths of the spiritual and ethical life, had also from the beginning a strong consciousness of the corporate social life, including those aspects of it which would, more particularly, be called political.

This was partly because Sikhism did not commend the life of a recluse. Its emphasis was on non-attachment in the spiritual sense mainly and not on renunciation of the concerns of the corporate life such as the family, the tribe and the nation. This made the Sikh vision comprehensive, a veritable scheme for a spiritually-oriented life in the world of social relations, even though the extremist ascetic view would frown upon it. While there were hundreds of sects in medieval India, both Hindus and Muslims among whom religion sometimes took the militant form over sectarian squabbles or over local, temporary grievances, it was the distinction of Sikhism to have evolved a whole world vision in which spiritual ideals and ethical values were meant to condition and influence all the human relations—personal as well as social and political. The vision was bound in the course of time, given provocation and persecution by the state, to result in resistance and a determined struggle to fight tyranny.

Sikh heroic traditions, like those of martyrdom, find their origin and genesis in the teachings and examples of the Gurus. Sikh religion, as it was brought into being by the Gurus, is a complete theory and strategy to regenerate man and human race with a view to reconstructing society on the basis of righteousness which must be reflected in all spheres of human activities assuming the form of social equality, economic justice, respect for dignity of labour on social plane. In view of this, it is not difficult to understand that the Gurus aimed at evolving such attitudes and institutions as would nurse, uphold and conform to the vision. The process was bound to arouse opposition; firstly of the vested

interests, secondly of the ignorant.

In so far as the opposition of the second kind was concerned, that could be met by making attempts at educating the ignorant to enable them to understand and appreciate the message of Sikhism. As regards the first kind of opposition, it being deliberate, was difficult to be met with through the means as suggested above in the case of second type of opposition. This opposition, quite often, had sharp claims, threatening to tear to pieces all those who would come in the way. Historical circumstances had made this type of opposition fiercer, eloquent and blood-thirsty.

How could the Muslim ruling class, particularly supported by the Muslim religious leadership who had lulled the Muslim masses to sleep by getting a few more crusades for them, tolerate any system to sprout which might, after some time, throw a challenge to them and their interests? Similar opposition could be expected from the non-Muslims, including the Hindus. The privileged classes of the Hindus, such as Brahmins etc., could ill-brook the egalitarian spirit of Sikhism. In this context, the opposition of the Hindu hill chiefs could be better understood.

Should the Sikhs acquiesce against such an opposition? Certainly not.

The Gurus' teachings and examples do not recommend the attitude of passivity, indifference or withdrawal, as it had been in vogue in the past few centuries in this country. The Gurus have persistently set their face against the life of withdrawal. Religion, according to them, was to be the inspiring spirit in a man's daily life and an over-aching influence which might wean him away from the world of corporate social life.

Guru Nanak and all his followers right upto Guru Gobind Singh have been critical of the austerities and ritualistic practices, which obscure from man the need of a life of virtue. The man of the God is to live in this world to practise righteousness and truth, but not to be of it. He must bear in his heart 'Vairag' or renunciation, but must on no account retreat from the scene of action. His renunciation must consist of his refusal to embroil himself in the pleasures of life, which are the source of selfishness. 'This earth is the home of the True Lord', says the Holy Granth; 'the Lord has His abode in it'. Hence, the injunction against renunciation or withdrawal.

The consequence of such an attitude was that the Sikh mind became extremely sensitive to the social and political developments.

It got filled with the intense desire to do and to dare even at the risk of his life, of course, for righteousness. Such a mind is, in fact, the basis of heroism. Guru Nanak says: "Such persons are heroes who fight for the cause of righteousness." They are marked for their capacity to "bear the unbearable" and such people are "mighty heroes in whom is infused the spirit of God." A hero is heroic even against the heaviest of odds, always without rancour, merciful even to the foe. In sufferings, he is always unruffled, bearing misfortune with equanimity of spirit as destined by the timeless creator who sends to man life and death, joy and sorrow as it may suit His purposes. This faith buoys him up even in the midst of the greatest misfortunes when the mortal can be called upon to bear the loss of all his dear and near ones, including all his children, and death in battle of his brave soldiers dearer than the children of his flesh. According to Kabir, "He alone is the hero who fights to defend the humble and the helpless, who, even though hacked limb by limb, will not flee from the field." (Page 1105, *Adi Granth*).

Heroism has been exalted as great a position as God Himself. The God worshipped by the Gurus has the attributes of might to destroy evil when it is rampant and becomes a menace to the existence of righteousness. This character comes out in numerous hymns. Guru Arjan, for example, refers to God as 'mighty to succour'. Guru Nanak, in an exalted vision, refers to the destruction of evil and tyranny in age after age. Thus runs one such hymn:

"The beloved Lord created Krishna, the child hero, and gave him the strength to drag by the hair the tyrants, Kansa and Chinder. He is the true might, destroyer of the power of intoxicated brutes."

In the great epic *Suraj Parkash*, Guru Arjan is reported also to have preached thus:

"Fight with the tyrants who oppose the humble, therein lies true piety."

Guru Arjan Dev, at one place, uses the honorific as 'Guru Sura', which literally means the Heroic Lord (Page 293, *Adi Granth*).

The pervasive theme of heroic endeavour is clearly manifest in various compositions of Guru Gobind Singh. At the end of rendering of the epic of Krishna in which, contrary to the usual presentation of this God as immersed in dalliance in the idyllic surroundings of Braj, his heroic aspect has been emphasized, the

ideal heroic, thus, enunciated in verse which acquires sublimity in its flow.

"Praised be he whose tongue is ever uttering the name of Lord, and who is constantly contemplating holy war."

The concept of Sikh heroism, therefore, implies concern and courageous determination of evolving society embodying Sikh ideals, upholding virtue and righteousness at any cost, even at the cost of one's life, sharply sensitive to the calls of times to wage incessant war against tyranny and forces of dehumanisation and degradation with the avowed laudable object of setting up the sublime value, shaping the time spirit to build the society as envisioned by the Gurus.

Taking heroism in the sense as adumbrated above, the Gurus were heroes par excellence. 'Babar Vani', is eloquent testimony to the heroic note which formed the root tendency of Guru Nanak. In this composition, one will find that the true hero does not hesitate even to challenge God, he is all aflame, giving light of hope to the helpless. The Guru says :

"Babar has rushed down from Kabul with his wedding party of lust, and unrighteously demands the surrender of India's womanhood. Decency and religion have hid themselves from fright. Unrighteousness is rampant and triumphant."

"Muslim Mullahs and Hindu priests are thrust aside. The devil is making unholy marriages, in this carnage, everywhere rise wails and lament; blood flows all around to serve for the ritual saffron. Just, however, is the Lord and just is His doom. He is ever just."

"Those, who live in sin, their life's garment shall be torn to tatters and shreds. Let India remember my warning."  
(Page 722-23, *Adi Granth*).

This brief excerpt is eloquent enough to express the agony, anguish and shame of Nanak's soul in which the outraged soul of India herself speaks. The way and to the extent Guru Nanak felt shame, the degradation, the helplessness which no one till then had felt or expressed so keenly, obviously indicate the hero in Guru Nanak.

By the time Guru Arjan came to occupy the apostolic seat, it appears that the Sikh church was gathering enough importance to draw on itself the hostility of both the Muslim divines and the



Mughal court. Among others, Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, who arrogated to himself the title of Mujadi-di-Alf-i-Sani (Renovator of Islam in the second Millennium), is stated to have sent a complaint to Jehangir against the growing influence of Guru Arjan as a religious teacher, to whom some Muslims also showed reverence. Thus the fanatical Muslim theologians and priests, naturally, would not stand. As a measure of striking terror among non-Muslims trying to pervert Muslims and also by way of punishing him for his temerity in blessing Jehangir's rebel son, Khusaro, Guru Arjan was sentenced to death with torture. He is stated to have been offered the alternative to embrace Islam to save his life—the offer which he downright rejected. Guru Arjan met his terrible fate, in a spirit of clam faith. His life was a continuous toil in the service of the Lord and his men, always working for the righteousness to prevail.

Guru Arjan's example was of a hero suffering for the cause of good on this earth calmly and resignedly by using only persuasions to change the mind of unrighteous. But with the succession of Guru Hargobind to the apostolic seat, it was made explicit and clear that the hero can legitimately make use of force to combat the evil of unrighteousness when all other means fail. This emphasis on the philosophy of heroism was symbolised in the apostolic style which the Sixth Guru adopted. He wore two swords, one on each side; instead of the rosary of his predecessors. And his seat he called 'throne' instead of a 'cot' as heretofore. These marks of royalty and power were needed to reorientate the general outlook and policy of the Sikh church.

Guru Hargobind had to undergo imprisonment for a period by order of his father's persecutor, Jehangir, but was later set free. With Shah Jahan's forces also, he fought five skirmishes and his relations with the Mughal government were of open hostility. Even at Kiratpur, his activities were that of an active crusader, ever striving and struggling to awaken the masses to new realities.

Guru Har Rai's sponsorship of the cause of Dara, who stood for freedom in religious as well as politico-social fields, was admittedly in line with the general heroic temper of Sikhism. So was the bold gesture of the child Guru Har Krishan.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's career and martyrdom present unsurpassable examples of heroism. Aurangzeb, who inherited the throne in 1656 after a series of brilliant though unscrupulous strokes of strategy unleashed a countrywide campaign of religious

persecution of the Hindus and other non-Muslims, including the Sikhs. His purpose was obvious, mainly to coerce all of them to enter into the fold of Islam and to turn India into an Islamic state in actual terms—by converting its entire population to Islam.

Indian Muslims have not concealed Aurangzeb's true role as the king who strove to convert the whole of India to Islam. Contemporary Muslim writers of memoirs have flatteringly, and out of a sense of elation, recorded all the enactments of Aurangzeb for the coercion of the Hindus. The tradition lingers to this day among the advocates of Islamic domination in the Indian sub-continent to regard Aurangzeb as almost a sacred personage, the Ghazi or crusader for the faith.

The poet Iqbal, by whom has been nurtured in great part the idea of Islamic domination, which, in time, became the demand for 'Pakistan' in his philosophical work in verse, 'Rumaz-i-Bekhud'i' (secrets of the ecstatic bliss) has narrated an incident of Aurangzeb's intrepidity on the sudden appearance of a tiger when at prayer. In introducing the story after lamenting the 'apostasy' of Akbar and the subsequent proliferation of that in Dara, Shah Jahan's mystically-inclined son, being done to death by Aurangzeb, his younger brother, Aurangzeb is significantly designated as 'Tarkash-Mara Kharang-i-Akhirin' (last arrow in our Indian Muslim's quiver).

Guru Tegh Bahadur, like a true hero, was sure to assert himself in the face of such open tyranny. He, therefore, sought to create resistance to this religious persecution and did not hesitate even to court death.

Like his father, Guru Gobind Singh was absolutely fearless and determined to resist all types of injustice. He even believed in mounting offensive against the forces of evil and tyranny. He gave expression to this resolve of his in his different compositions. His demeanour, his utterances, the configuration of his personality, all speak of his heroic character. The descriptive names as 'the Lord of Plume', 'the Lord of the Hawk' 'the Protector of Faith; by which he is known, are all evocative of noble heroism and chivalry. He is ever heroic in the thick of the battle, fighting without rancour or hate, merciful even to the foe. In suffering, he was always unruffled, bearing misfortune with equanimity of spirit as destined by the Timeless creator who sends to man life and death, joy and sorrow as it might suit His inscrutable purposes.

The faith buoyed him up even in the midst of the greatest

misfortunes which mortal can be called upon to bear—the loss of dear and near ones, including all the children of his flesh. All this is undaunted heroism.

Not only this, the Guru, even more than his predecessors, spared no pains to make heroism a part of Sikh mind. In this context, he employed literature to secure his ends. He invoked the Indian heroic traditions by inducting contemporaneity and relevance into his preachings. He, therefore, re-wrote the story of 'Chandi', the goddess who struggled against the demons to put an end to them.

While Hinduism had a glorious heroic past, it had ceased to have a realistic appeal because of mythological manner of its presentation of war. The Hindus failed to realise that the Asuras and Rakhshasas (demons and monsters) of his religious fictions were here and now, in the shape of the tyrants of these later times. This link Hinduism could not provide, for its approach was fictional and mythological. Sikhism, on the other hand, provided a general realistic approach to the problems of life and exhibited what may be called the historical imagination in reacting to the social situation.

It was exactly because of this general spirit that Guru Gobind Singh clearly read symbolical meanings of the legends of Durga, Rama, Krishna, Kalka and others. The demons were not rampant only in the remote past, calculated according to Hindu mythology in terms of hundreds and thousands of years. Nor was the promised appearance of the Lord, similarly, thousands of years away. That was, precisely, however, as the Indian mind read the meaning of human history. The Lord's intervention was in the hoary past and any indeterminate future. No one thought what the meaning of the events of the recent past and present was.

It was thought as if by some inscrutable law, the divine processes were suspended now and for the near future—a strangely unperceptive and unrealistic appraisal of the human situation. The Guru saw and wished his contemporaries to realise that the demonic forces were there and performing their devil's dance in this holy land of piety and faith. The Asuras were not far away. They were there in the form of every marauder, every arrogant agent of those who held the reigns of power. This was precisely the moment when Chandi must appear, when the sword must be unsheathed and a terrible revenge to be taken for all that these generations of tyrants had done the land. There were

demons, ever present, and there must be ever Durga-Chandi in action against them, resplendent in her eight arms, mounted on the lion of her wrath.

This was the significance of the Durga-legend for the Guru, and that was why he got more than one version made and recited to those who came to pay him reverence. Not with empty piety divorced from action, but with the zeal for heroic endeavour must his followers be filled.

Besides invoking the Indian heroic traditions, the Gurus' archetypal form and various symbols used in Sikhism are also expressive of heroic behaviour expected of the Sikhs.

Guru Gobind Singh's figure riding on blue horse, aigrette fixed to his crown-like turban, eagle perched on his wrist, flashing sword in his hand, countenance calm and stern with eyes shedding serenity and the meaningful glance—all constitute the archetypal form, of which every element embodies some trait of heroism. Aigrette symbolises challenges to the tyrannical might of the Mughal Emperor who wore crown made of gold and decorated profusely with diamonds and other decorative material. Crown marked royalty of the true Padshah.

Similarly, horse, apart from being the vehicle of the Guru as apparently it was, had deeper meanings. In the racial memories of man, this animal has been considered much more than its biological status and it has been associated with different activities of human beings.

Eliade finds it an animal associated with burial rites in Chthonian cults. Mertens Stenon considers it an ancient symbol of the cyclic movement of the world of phenomena. Diel concludes that the horse stands for intense desires and instruments in accordance with the general symbolism of the steed and the vehicle. The animal was also dedicated to Mars and the sudden appearance of a horse was thought to be an omen of war. This animal has also been considered as symbol of intuitive understanding. It has also been held that horse-shoe brings luck.

In the Brihadamiyaka Upnishad, the horse is actually a symbol of the cosmos. The Indian Asvaras would depict themselves as horsemen.

Punjab, being the meeting place of many cultural groups from different parts of the world, starting from the Pre-Aryan period upto the advent of the Mughals, must have imbibed something of all of them and something of that must have

continued to linger in the Punjab mind upto Guru Gobind Singh's period and later. Guru Gobind Singh's own achievements were also sure to enrich or modify or give new meaning to the horse-symbol. This being so, the horse came to be regarded by the Sikhs as harbinger of blessing, embodiment of intensity of desire. Similarly, the selection of horse to be definitely blue had some distinct meaning. 'Blue' stood for heaven, rarefied atmosphere, clear sky, deep thinking. This colour is darkness made visible. It being between white and black (that is day and night), indicated an equilibrium which varies with the time.

Eagle perched on the wrist of the Guru was not a fashion or predilection, rather something eloquent, expressive and poignantly ecstatic. Eagle sometimes has been looked upon as symbolising the language and thought which, though well-stored in the 'unconscious' has been lost to the consciousness. In its symbol, the particular represents the general, not as a dream, not as a shadow but as a living and momentary revelation of the inscrutable. In oriental as well as occidental traditions, it has been considered as a symbol of the height of the spirit of men and of the spiritual principle in general. In the Egyptian hieroglyphic system, the letter 'A' is represented by the figure of an eagle, standing for the warmth of life, the origin, the day.

From the Far East to northern Europe, the eagle is the bird associated with gods of power and war. According to Vedic tradition, it is also important as a messenger, being the bearer of Soma from Indra. In Samartian art, the eagle is the emblem of the thunderbolt and of warlike endeavour. In all oriental art, it is often shown fighting either as the bird Imdugud, who ties the terrestrial and celestial deer together by their tails, or as Garuda attacking the serpent. Similarly, in Christianity, the eagle plays the role of a messenger from heaven. According to Jerome, the eagle is the emblem of the ascension and of prayer. Among the Greeks, it was believed to fly higher than any other bird and, hence, was regarded the most apt expression of divine majesty. The ability to fly and fulminate, to rise so as to dominate and destroy base forces, are doubtless the essential characteristics of all eagle-symbolism. Dante even calls the eagle the bird of God.

In Sikhism, eagle is neither considered as the symbol of sun-worship as it was considered in ancient Syria, nor is it considered as bearer of the Soma from Indra. In fact, it is not associated with any godology; it represents the spirit of the Sikhs, meaning thereby



'Charhdi Kala' and the resolve to kill the serpents symbolising tyrants and the evil-minded on this earth. Besides this, it represented dash, will to do, to dare and to soar higher and higher. It also symbolises divine majesty.

Sword, likewise, is linked with steel as a symbol of the transcendent toughness of the all-conquering spirit.

Examination of the subterranean meanings of different aspects of the archetypal form of the tenth Guru, as discussed above, leads us to the conclusion that much was done by the Gurus to build heroic tradition.

In the eighteenth century, the traditions of heroism were still more deepened and strengthened. The century opens with the grim armed struggle launched by the tenth Guru to ward off the unjust impositions on the non-Sikhs by the Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb. The Sikhs suffered heavily. Even then, their record of bravery and courage was praiseworthy. Individuals too showed remarkable acts of valour. Bachitter Singh's contest with violent and intoxicated elephant on the outer gate of the Anandgarh was an act doubtlessly heroic and courageous. The courage, which the forty of Chamkaur Garhi exhibited, was also a marked example of heroism. The steadfastness displayed by the younger sons of the Guru, while they were on the verge of being bricked alive, was also no less heroic.

Guru Gobind Singh, during his days, did his best to prevail upon Bahadur Shah to defend the righteousness and punish Wazir Khan who had flouted it. After having failed in his effort, he commissioned Banda to lead the struggle against tyranny of all types, particularly the political one. He also issued fiats (hukamnamas) to the Sikhs, urging them to volunteer for the cause. Banda and the Sikhs under his guidance took upon themselves to protect anyone who was subjected to injustice or ill-treatment. They smashed the Mughal power wherever they went and punished all those people who were protagonists of bigotry in religion. All this they did in a spirit of resignation combined with mission. They were absolutely fearless, like their God, whom they remembered as 'Nirbhai'.

On December 17, 1714, Banda surrendered after eight months of stout resistance to the enemy. He along with his comrades-in-arms, was captured, put in chains and then led in a mock procession first at Lahore and then at Delhi. The scene is described by an eye-witness in the following words :



"Those unfortunate Sikhs, who had been reduced to this last extremity, were quite happy and contented with their fate; not the slightest sign of dejection or humility was to be seen on their faces. In fact, most of them, as they passed along on their camels, seemed happy and cheerful, joyfully singing the sacred hymns of their scripture. And if anyone from among those in the lanes and bazars called out to them that their own excesses had reduced them to that condition, they quickly retorted saying that it had been so willed by the Almighty and that their capture and misfortune was in accordance with His Will. And if anyone said, 'Now you will be killed', they shouted, 'Kill us, when were we afraid of death?'

All the captives suffered executions at the rate of 100 per day, starting from March 5, 1716. According to John Surman and Edward Stephenson, "to the last it has not been found that even one apostatised from this new formed religion."

On June 19, 1716, Banda was executed in a brutal manner. Before the execution, he was offered pardon if he renounced his faith and accepted Islam. But he scornfully refused even to think about the suggestion. He, like his followers, suffered death of a true hero. He and all those, who struggled and suffered under his guidance and command, were conscious of their role and goal. Hence, Sayyed Mohammad Latif's statement that "the audacious achievements of this monster (Banda) are exception to the rule. His triumphs are not remembered as heroic acts but as malicious and cold-blooded atrocities," has no foundation whatsoever.

After the execution of Banda Bahadur, the Sikh power broke. The authorities initiated a vigorous campaign in the Punjab to root out the Sikh movement. The period from 1716 to the death of Mir Mannu is such when the persecution of the Sikhs was conducted on a large scale according to well-calculated plans. Zakariya Khan made head-hunting a profitable business by offering a graded scale of reward; a blanket for cutting off a Sikh's hair, 50 rupees for a Sikh's scalp. Plunder of Sikhs was made lawful; giving shelter to Sikhs or withholding information of their movement was made a capital offence. The systematic persecution of the Sikhs was carried out by Yahiya Khan, Shah Nawaz Khan and Mir Mannu. The Khalsa remained stoically unnerved and unshaken. They remained as defiant as ever and developed a spirit of bravado which enabled them to turn adversity as fore-runner of prosperity.

After 1752, Punjab became the part of Afghan empire and

the Sikhs were a continuous menace to it. Ahmad Shah Abdali's last big attempt in 1762 also failed miserably to make any impression on the Sikhs. They continued to challenge the Afghan authority till they succeeded in breaking it altogether.

It was during this period of dire trials that the Sikhs, under inspiration of the Gurus' sustaining word, with their eyes fixed in hope on the day when the righteous order of the Gurus would be established, evolved a code language in which, with heartening euphemism and cheerful humour, they gave to the very misfortune of life pleasing and sustaining names. In this code language, parched grams would be called almonds; hunger intoxication; dying would-be campaigning; while a unit or one would be described as one and a quarter hundred thousand. In a spirit of heroic manly humour, running away was described as becoming a stag; the hooka, forbidden to the Sikhs, a she-ass; a limping man, Tamerlane; riffraff was 'the tail-less herd' that is worthless cattle. With a supreme gesture of contempt for worldly goods or idle pleasure, money was called husks; women, a hog; an elephant, a buffalo calf; sugar, a rare luxury for wandering and hunted men, was denigrated as ashes, and so on. Such code words ran into hundreds. This was still another facet of that spirit of self-reliance and heroism which was generated by the Gurus.

The Sikhs did not even allow the heroic spirit to withdraw in individual cases. It remained as responsible to the difficulties of individuals as it was to the corporate difficulties.

On the 10th April, 1763, some Brahmins of Kasur appealed to the Sikhs, who had gathered at Amritsar in connection with Baisakhi celebrations, against Usman Khan of that town who had forcibly seized one of their women. The Sikhs at once decided to rescue the helpless woman and marched against the Afghan tyrant. Usman Khan, with 500 of his men, was killed in the affray; the wife of the Hindu was restored to him, and the town, particularly the mansions of the Afghans, was subjected to wholesale plunder.

The Sikh heroic character shone like pole-star in the sky, beckoning to the people of the eighteenth century that there was the Khalsa ever-ready to wage heroic struggle for them. The first few decades of the 18th century witnessed this spirit, unalloyed and pure.

When the Misdars began to quarrel among themselves for acquiring independent power, heroism also suffered in quality.

The Sikh people, in general, however, remained heroic on behavioural plane. As a matter of fact, heroism became part of their inner self which reflected itself in their outward attitudes. This tendency still exists and that is why the Sikhs are *braver*, more assertive, more liberal and more carefree than other people around them.

This Sikh heroic character is well preserved in folk-lore as well as in religious liberations. There are adages which have very faithfully preserved the heroic behaviour of the Sikhs. For instance, the adage : "Come, O come Kachh wala baba" (the person wearing shorts). It demonstrates how people, particularly the ladies in trouble, used to call the Sikhs considering that they alone would respond to their call, purposely using the epithet 'Kachh wala' because otherwise they would be caught as defiant of the fact they had been subjected by the tyrants. The spirit of heroism had so much wormed into the psyche of the Sikhs that some of compositions went even to the extent of equating Khalsa with a hero. The following lines of Bhai Nand Lal bring out very clearly the heroic aspect of the personality of the Khalsa :

"Khalsa is he who gives up back-biting;  
 Khalsa is he who gives a fight in the front line;  
 Khalsa is he who gives up covetous sight;  
 Khalsa is he who is in communion with God;  
 Khalsa is he who is attached to the Guru;  
 Khalsa is he who receives blows in the face;  
 Khalsa is he who rears up the poor;  
 Khalsa is he who destroys the evil;  
 Khalsa is he who is on horse-back;  
 Khalsa is he who is ever at war."

The *Rabatnamas* of Prahlad Singh, Bhai Chopra Singh as also *Prem Sumarg* recommend heroic attitude for the Sikhs.

## Chapter 21

# MARTYRDOM

Martyrdom has been derived from the Greek word 'martyr' meaning witness. In its implied sense, it signifies one who by his supreme sacrifice for his faith bears witness to its truth, and to his own passionate adherence to it. Long before the birth of Christ, the Greek writers' mind had been deeply influenced by the sufferings of the Jewish people at the hands of tyrannical Egyptians, Babylonians and such others and they very impassionedly made use of the word 'martyr' to denote their sacrifice. Christianity provoked in the early centuries a long series of persecutions resulting in the martyrdom of thousands in Rome and other parts of the Roman Empire. Excruciating torture and death continued for hundreds of years to be the fate of those who stood by the faith of Jesus Christ, till it became the official religion of the Roman Empire, and later, of the Eastern (Byzantine) Empire. In the course of its long history, Christianity has seen a long string of martyrs, who resisted, what they considered to be the wrongs of the powerful establishment, the Papacy, which for several centuries, was a super State, with the zeal to suppress all non-conformity and revolt. These persecutions became particularly frequent from the sixteenth century onwards, as the challenge to the power and privileges of Papacy grew in the protest and movements in the various countries of Western Europe. In earlier centuries, those who demanded the removal of injustice in society, like the Loccords in England or semi legendary followers of Kava, the black-smith in Iran, were presented and victimised. The Papacy came down with a heavy hand and also on new thought in sciences—Galileo and Bruno providing the examples, though the former escaped only by tactfully compromising with the persecutor. The brutal suppression of the Protestants in the Netherlands, France and England—the last in the reign of Blood Mary, and the long history of inquisition as the instrument of suppression of dissent provide capital examples of determined persecution, and no less

determined resistance to it by those whose spirit and temper was essentially that of martyrs. The horrible persecutions by the Puritans, themselves victims of persecutions, in the seventeenth century in the American Colonies of Quaker enacted a similar drama on the periphery of the Christian world. The Christians of all denominations hold that the martyrs are "athletes of God contending for heavenly prize". A martyr's passion and death are considered as analogous to the passion and death of Christ, who has always been regarded as the archetype of the martyr, particularly because of the continuing influence of the crucifixion over the millenia and in the line countless millions, and the global and universal significance this great event acquired.

Islam, like Christianity, has a large number of martyrs. The Arabic word for 'martyr' in Quran and in Muslim theology is *Shahid*, (pl. *Shuhada*) the literal meaning of which is 'present as a witness'. It implies all that is understood by the Greek martyr, and the English martyr; but it is also a much more comprehensive term, for, according to Muhammedan law, not only those who die in witness of or in defence of the faith, are martyrs but all those who die such deaths as are calculated to excite the compassion and pity of their fellow men. The word occurs in the Quran, Surah iv, 71 : "Who obeys God and the apostle, these are with those with whom God has been well pleased—with prophets (*Nabi Yin*) and confessors (*Siddiqin*), and martyrs (*Shuhada*) and the righteous (*Sualihin*) : as fair company are they."

A perfect martyr, or *Shahid-ul-Kamil* is one who has either been slain in a religious war, or who has been killed unjustly. But the schools of divinity are not agreed as to whether it is necessary, or not, that such persons should be in state of ceremonial purity at the time of their death, to entitle them to such a high rank.

A special blessing is promised to those who die in 'jihad' or religious war (see Quran, Surah iii, 163) "Count not those who are killed in the way of God, as dead, but living with their Lord". And according to Muslim law, all persons who have died in defence of the faith, or have been slain unjustly are entitled to Muslim burial without the usual ablution or any change of clothes, such as are necessary in the case of ordinary persons, the rank of martyrdom being such as to render the corpse legally and religiously pure.

But in addition to these two classes of persons, namely those

who are slain in religious war and those who have been killed unjustly, the rank of Shahid is given, in a figurative sense, to any person who dies in such a manner as to excite the sympathy and pity of mankind such as by sudden death, or from some malignant disease, or in child-birth or in the requirement of knowledge or a stranger in a foreign country, or dying on Thursday night. These persons are entitled to the rank of martyr, but not to the honour of being buried without legal washing and purifications.

One of the early applications of the term Shahid is to Imam Hussain, grandson of the prophet, who fell on the battle-field of Karbala along with seventy-two members from his own family and his tribe Banu Hashim and from other tribes supporting his cause. This cause the Islamic world in general has regarded as just, and Imam Hussain's opponents have been branded as tyrants and aggressors. Thus the earliest application of the term 'Shahid' is to those who fell fighting on the prophet's side in the battle of Badr about which Allah says in the Koran that not the prophet but Allah shot the arrows that brought the victory. To fix further the connotation of the term Hadis, saying attributed to the prophet : Manatai Mata Babai Muhammad (in) Al-e-Muhammad (in) Mata Shahid, (one who has died for love of Muhammad and for love of the progeny of Muhammad has died a Martyr).

In the Indian context, the term 'Shahid' came to be applied to those soldiers and others who fell fighting against the Hindus. Strange stories were set afloat regarding the miraculous powers of these 'Shahids'. It was believed that always at midnight hour, the Shahid would come out of his graves in full panoply and would harm anyone who stood in the way. He was reported to overturn cot in which an unbeliever might be sleeping and would wreak vengeance for any disrespect shown to his tomb.

While the concept of martyrdom and the term 'martyr' continued to be the integral part of Christian and Muslim religious traditions, it did not seem to have any impact on the Indian mind as a whole.

Turning to the dictionaries of Sanskrit where such a term may be expected to figure, all that one finds are a few coinages to correspond with the English word 'martyr'. Apte's Students English Sanskrit dictionary has entered against 'martyr' one or two phrases-parallels, such a Deh-tyagin (sacrificer or forsaker of one's life), Deh-nyasa (surrender of body). So far this important concept is concerned, all that we find are a few, perhaps inadequate coinages



which hardly reflect the great act, redolent of spiritual struggle and sacrifice that is implied in martyrdom.

Such absence of an adequate term, however, should not be supposed to imply that the spiritual attitude accompanying martyrdom was unknown to the people of India in ancient times. On the other hand, to meet the challenge posed by tyranny and evil, voluntary sufferings undertaken for self-purification or for arousing the conscience and will to resist in others was a common phenomenon. There are instances of Brahmins, rishis and other holy persons, deflecting a tyrant from his evil designs through the resolve of self-immolation. Besides, any infringement of the code of Dharma by a tyrant would also draw to his portal, some person held holy, who would give up food and resolve fast unto death unless the wrong was righted. It would be perfectly legitimate to list such acts as form of martyrdom, for in all these the elements of martyrdom are present, except the very last one of dying at the tyrants' hands.

Dying for one's faith and presumably becoming a martyr has, however, scriptural sanction in the Gita. In the chapter of Karm Yoga (the Yoga of action) in the context of the surrender unto God, Lord Krishna says :

"One's own dharma, though imperfect, is better than the dharma of another well-discharged;  
Better death in one's own dharma  
The dharma of another is full of fear."

What is implied in the sacred Gita texts is this that Arjuna being a Kshatriya must not shun the battle. But it has also a wider implication and inculcates heroic martyrdom in adhering to the duty of sacrifice of life for one's faith. This being so, it cannot be denied that the fact of martyrdom existed. Only it was not considered that it could be a very potent weapon of bringing about the ruin of the tyrants as also of the disintegrating forces. Triumph of right over wrong has been anticipated and thought to be inexorable law but such a triumph, instead of fearless sacrifice of life offered by a noble person was viewed more directly to come through divine intervention in the form of destruction of tyrants and evil-doers. One instance, among others, of such triumph is the steadfast faith of the child-saint Prahlada, who was threatened with death by his demon-atheist (Daitya—obviously non-Aryan) father, was, however, succoured by the Lord in the form of the Lionman (Narsimha) incarnation. The story is a household word

and part of the Indian people. Prahlada had all the characteristics in respect of his holy resolve, to die for his devotion, of the saint martyr only through divine intervention, he is spared the last agony and sacrifice of life.

Sikhism, borrowed the term martyr from Islam, as it had done in cases of such terms as Allah, Khuda, Karim, Hukam, Khasim, Deg Tegh. One of the major reasons of doing this was the in-depth tendency of Sikhism from its very inception to chalk out a line of orientation for itself away from Brahmanical orthodoxy and other forms of expression of the religious ideas current among sects which were rooted in Hinduism, howsoever far they might in course of time have strayed from its central path and adopted an eclectic attitude towards Islam, thereby giving occasion to the urges to adopt such Muslim concepts and terms entered into the popular vocabulary of the people.

Yet the concept of Sikhism has its own uniqueness, distinctiveness, novelty and freshness. Various strands of thoughts and impulses entered into its evolution and formation. The one which is the foremost is the polemics of the progress of the society. There is evil and there is suffering. Man has constantly to struggle to defeat this evil. The man of God must not shirk from taking on himself suffering if necessary. In this struggle, God will, of course, be on the side of the righteous and the holy. His purposes must prevail but whereas the traditional Indian mythology, the Rakhshsas symbolising the evil are destroyed by miraculous intervention of the deity or the Avtar whose bold stroke smites the head of demon just when he is about to perpetuate the most heinous outrage; in the Sikh religious thought the ultimate triumph of Good is assured after long travail, suffering and self-sacrifice on the part of the good and the holy.

To the man of God, joy and sorrow are alike and he never loses equivocableness in either situations. The experience of suffering in one of the constantly recurring themes of meditations of the Guru.

Guru Nanak says :

"The soul hungers after the True name  
By such hunger are all sorrows consumed."

*(Asa—page 9)*

In another hymn by the fourth Guru it is said :

"If thou sendst me hunger O Lord,  
I feel still fitted, and in suffering too find joy."

The word of Guru Arjan, who was subjected to unbearable torture by the fiendishly sadistic minions of Jehangir is a constant anticipation of suffering to be undergone in God's cause. Yet his word is also one constant paean of joy in God and in submission to His will. What is at the basis of such expression of bliss is not the hope of a miraculous annulment of suffering but the transmutation of inevitable suffering through resignation and submission into the experience of bliss. Below are a few excerpts from the hymns of Guru Arjan which illustrate the aforesaid theme :

"One who is in the extreme of difficulties,  
 Without succour and support from anyone,  
 And is beset by implacable foes and deserted even by kith  
 and kin.  
 Is bereft of all shelter and hope of finding refuge.  
 If such a one contemplates the supreme Lord, not a breath  
 of hot air shall touch him."

Champions of this type of approach are called mighty and when they have to offer sacrifices of their physical frames, they are called martyrs. Guru Arjan Dev was obviously first martyr to be followed by Guru Tegh Bahadur and innumerable others. Such people bear with unruffled peace in human torture at the hands of their persecutors. Bhai Gurdas, a very close associate of Guru Arjan, vouchsafes in the following verses that the Guru while undergoing martyrdom was as perfectly placid as snow-clad tops of mountains.

"As the fish are one with the waves of the river.  
 So was the Guru immersed in the River that is Lord.  
 As the moth merges itself at sight into the flame  
 So was the Guru's light merged with the Divine light.  
 In the hour of intense suffering, he was aware of nothing  
 except the Divine Lord like the deer who bears no  
 sound but the beat of the hunter's drum.  
 Like the bee who is wrapped inside the lotus he passed  
 the night of his life in a casket of joy.  
 Never did he forget to utter the Lord's even as the Chatrik  
 never fails to utter its cry.  
 To the man of God, joy is the fruit of devotion and  
 meditation with equanimity in holy company.  
 May I be a sacrifice unto the Guru Arjan." (Var 24)

The theme of resignation lies at the core of the concept of

Sikh martyrdom. These should be considered in terms of retreat for the normal concerns of existence but the sacrifice of inordinate desire, and freedom from the five forms of evil enumerated by the traditional ethical philosophy implies supreme sacrifice for life to be better on this earth; in this respect the concept is existential and certainly not other-worldly. This being so the Sikh Shaheeds are never given any assurance of some sort of Heaven or some other things as Christian as well as Muslim traditions of martyrdom would promise.

The ideal of a crusader also went a long way to shape the lineaments of the concept of martyrdom.

There is repetition of such ideas in the composition of the Gurus who preceded Guru Gobind Singh, and of some of the saints whose hymns are included in the Holy Granth. Guru Nanak says :

"Shouldst thou cherish the desire to participate in the play of true love, place thy head on the palm of thy hand; Then alone mayst thou enter this quarter; Shouldst thou put thy foot forward on this path, hesitate not to give up thy head."

The saintly Kabir in words which continue to this day to inspire the Sikhs with the zeal and fervour of holy and patriotic war, has made what sounds like a call of a crusader—crusader in favour of the cause of the humble, the poor and the needy.

"The sky-resounding kettle-drum (of spiritual inspiration) is struck, and the heart is pierced with the true passion (for righteousness) the hero is engaged in battle, now is the time to fight unto the last.

He alone is the hero who fights to defend the humble and helpless who even though hacked limb by limb, will not flee the field." *(Page 1105 of Adi Granth)*

The pervasive theme of heroic endeavour and crusading zeal has been lent poignancy, crispness and vigour, chiselled clarity and forceful diction by Guru Gobind Singh. He brings forth very clearly the crusading character of God. He says :

"He cherishes the humble, protects the righteous and destroys the evil-doers." (Akal Ustat). "He consumes into flaming suffering an evil and crush the lords of the wicked in an instant." (Akal Ustat).

"Millions of demons such as Sumbha, Nisumbha has He destroyed in an instant;

Dhumar-Lohana, Chanda, Mumda and Mahikhasur has He defeated in a moment;

Demons like Chmara, Rana, Chichura, Rakti Chana has he slaughtered at a stroke;

And he casts his own role as a crusader and wishes His followers to emulate Him."

At the end of the rendering of the epic of Krishna in which contrary to the usual presentation of this God (Lord Krishna) as enmeshed in dalliance in the ideallic surroundings of Braj the ideal heroic character is thus enunciated in verse marked for sublimity and its flow.

"Praised be he whose tongue is ever uttering the name of the Lord, and who is constantly contemplating holy war; this body shall one day turn to dust, but sailing in the ship of noble endeavour his fame shall carry him across the ocean of this world;

Abiding in the house of spiritual poise, he shall make his wisdom shine forth like a lamp; And grasping firmly the broom of divine wisdom he shall sweep away the filth of cowardice."

Towards the close of the stirring epic narrative of the war of Durga in Chandi Chritar, the crusading character is defined in words which inspire undying idealism :

"Grant me, this boon, O' Lord; May I never turn away from righteous action;

I never know fear as I engage in battle with the foe and resolve fairly to win;

May I ever instruct myself in the passion to utter thy praises! And at the last when the hour of destiny arrives, may it be granted me to lay down my life fighting on the field of battle to the last drop of blood."

A Sikh martyr, therefore, is supposed to be a crusader for the cause and he shall not acquiesce in death like a coward or a passivist rather he would court it and wed it as a last resort exhausting all other noble means to avoid it and that too with this consciousness that to suffer death is also a means to achieve the goal. Thus martyrdom in Sikhism is not self-extinction, it is on the other hand, a sort of affirmation in the faith the martyr holds and a positive projection of the urge of the martyr to uphold virtue and to resist evil.

Martyrdom became a tradition and an attitude in the eighteenth century. It got anchored in the Sikh psyche as an

instinct, indeed as a real passion. It appears that it was not derived from any other instinct, but is a principle *sui generis*, that is, a specific and necessary form of structural power.

This being so, it began to be represented by symbols wherein particular is represented by the general, not as a dream, not as a shadow, but as a living, and momentary revelation of the inscrutable. It also became the lineaments of myth which according to Rank, Andolf Stemer is the collective dream of the people. Many stories, some real and some mythical began to be set afloat. Martyrs began to be named "the favoured armies of the Guru who continued to wage war against all types of evil—political, moral or social—even after their apparent deaths. It began to be believed that in the battlefield, the martyr, participated in the forms invisible to the people, but very effectively. They were given the status as great as that of a saint whose words could become the immutable law of God. This being so, the martyrs became the important part of the text of the standard prayer as something at once to be recalled, admired and worshipped. This fact is amply borne out by the following excerpts from the text of the prayer :

"Those who for their religion allowed themselves to be cut up limb by limb, had their scalps scraped off, were broken on the wheel, were sawn or flayed alive; think of their sweet resignation and call on God."

(Wonderful Lord)

"Those who, to purge the temples of long-standing evils, suffered themselves to be ruthlessly beaten or imprisoned, to be shot, cut up, or burnt alive with kerosene oil but did not make any resistance or utter even a sigh of complaint; think of their faith and call on God."

(Wonderful Lord)

Just a casual perusal of the above-quoted excerpts of prayer would only confirm the statement made earlier that the phenomenon of martyrdom and the term 'Shahid' are an integral part of the Sikh tradition. So great was the veneration of the Sikh martyrs and their impact on the Sikh mind that one of their twelve Misl or federating clans came to be known as Misl Shaheedan (the clan of martyrs). The Misl was so named because of the celebrated martyr Baba Deep Singh Shaheed who fell in 1760 defending the holy Harimandir at Amritsar. As a matter of fact, the term 'Shahid' became in a special way a part of the Sikh vocabulary to designate fidelity to their faith in a manner which no other non-



Muslim group in India or elsewhere had adopted.

Prior to the period in the eighteenth century, the term must already have gained wide currency among the Sikhs; but it was applied very restrictedly in cases of Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Tegh Bahadur, four sons of Guru Gobind Singh and Guru Gobind Singh. Guru Arjan Dev, laid down his life but did not swerve his stand. Guru Tegh Bahadur gave sacrifice of his life for upholding the right of the people in general for freedom of conscience and worship. The four sons of the Guru courted martyrdom in resistance to the unjust efforts of the Government to impose the religion of the state on them.

After the death of Guru Gobind Singh and more particularly after the execution of Banda Bahadur the Mughal authorities took stern steps to destroy the Sikhs root and branch, as they had been convinced that Sikh ideology was bound to clash with their interests. Zakariya Khan's pronounced schedule of rewards to all those who would help the Government in identifying the Sikhs, in furnishing information regarding their whereabouts or actually killing them, is a case which brings into sharp focus the attitude of the authorities vis-a-vis Sikhs. The persecution of the Sikhs during Yahiya Khan, Shah Nawaz Khan and Mir Mannu was equally fierce, rather fiercer. Lakhpat Rai, the Minister of Yahiya Khan wreaked vengeance for the slaying of his brother in a fracas between a band of Sikh horsemen and the state constabulary.

The Sikh persecution at the hands of Mir Mannu was marked for its ferocity, bitterness, persistence and concentration. He sent roving columns to every nook and corner of his territory to destroy the Sikhs. His jezailis combed the villages for the Sikhs. The able-bodied were killed fighting; the non-combatants including women and children were brought in chains to Lahore and decapitated at the horse-market. Ahmad Shah Abdali also did 'their' worst to snuff out the Khalsa only in a single swoop, the Sikhs numbering over 12000 were put to sword.

In such an atmosphere, the Sikhs did not lose heart. Firm in their faith like a rock, they resisted the tyranny of the Government and laid down their lives for defence of their faith and those human values which under the despotic rule of the later Mughals were being trampled under foot.

Besides all such persons who met their end while defending their faith to be called 'Shahid' the term was applied even to those who were killed in their struggle for assertion and sovereignty.

As we move towards the close of the eighteenth century and after, the term 'Shahid' began to be used on wider scale and in a rough manner; it overstepped its earlier religious association to cover all who made the supreme sacrifice in pursuit of some socially approved ideal. These days, as social consciousness has grown and the traditions of struggle against entrenched authority and privilege had taken deeper and deeper roots, any kind of sacrifice, voluntary or involuntary, has indiscriminately been described as Shahidi—martyrdom.

All the same, the title of 'martyr' could not be applied to those who died in such a manner as to excite the sympathy and pity of mankind such as by sudden death or from some malignant disease, or in child-birth or in the acquirement of knowledge or a stranger in a foreign country<sup>1</sup> or dying on Thursday night as ceremonial books on Islam would suggest us.

---

1. *Raddu'l Muktar*, Vol. I, p. 952.

*Kashshaf Instilaba tu'l-Funan*, Vol I, p. 747.

## Chapter 22

# PRIMACY OF GOLDEN TEMPLE AND AMRITSAR

Another phenomenon of the eighteenth century was the elevation of Golden Temple and the city of Amritsar to the rank of the first and foremost of the places claiming allegiance of the whole Sikh community. As a matter of fact, Golden Temple, when it was raised by Guru Arjan Dev was meant to be as such. It was on account of this that quite a number of hymns were composed and incorporated<sup>1</sup> in Guru Granth Sahib with a view to sanctify the place and impressing upon the people regarding its exalted position. Historical evidence is also not lacking pertaining to this point. The Gurus' instructions to the Masands to come regularly on the Baisakhi day to Amritsar with the offerings which they had collected during the year preceding the day and to receive new instructions from the Guru to carry to the people, Sikhs and non-Sikhs, clearly points to the trend to which the Guru wished the circumstances to move. Moreover, the Guru's general call to the Sikhs to visit the temple and to have a sacred dip in the tank of Amrit is obviously expressive of the desire of the Guru to establish

---

1. "There is nothing like it in all the three worlds. Harimandir is like the Ship—the means for the people to cross over the worldly ocean triumphantly. A new joy pervades here every day. A sight of it annuls all sins.

"He himself has succoured His saints in their work.

He himself has come to see their task fulfilled.

Blessed is the earth, blessed the tank.

Blessed is the tank with Amrit filled.

Amrit overflowed the tank. He hath had the task completed.

Eternal is the Perfect Being.

The creator hath bestowed on me the nine treasures of the charisms.

No lack do I suffer now.

Enjoying His largesse, bliss have I attained;

Ever-expanding is the Lord's Bounty."

the primacy of the temple. The installation<sup>1</sup> of the Sikh scripture 'Guru Granth' in it and ever since to assign presiding place to it even when the Sikh Gurus were personally present, contributed vitally to the theme that the temple held a premier status.

The city of Amritsar the selection of whose site was made by Guru Amar Das rose in the estimation of the Sikhs as their reverence for Harimandir mounted. Apart from this, there were other reasons also which contributed to the enhancement of the respect of the place. Guru Amar Das had conceived the project of founding the city as a part of a big scheme of raising macro-social structures—so essential for a particular consciousness to emerge as also to help 'big' culture to supplant the 'little' culture. Guru Ram Das, whose extensive patronage was in fact responsible for the city to grow, caught the trail blazed by Guru Amar Das. The city came to have a unique personality and stance. It presented secular character; it was not segmented into different wards each having a particular community, it was designed as a compact unit leaving no scope for the people to dwell on basis of caste or creed. Deliberate attempts were made that the city should not reflect caste character, on the other hand, it should give a look of simple brotherhood. The city was also free from the feudal restrictions which many other cities suffered from in the medieval Punjab. No person was allowed special status or special privileges on the basis of her riches. The construction of high and palatial castles while the people in general lived in hutments did not fit in the conceptual framework of the Gurus and it was against this back-ground that Guru Arjan Dev rejected the demand of the Sikhs to raise Harimandir as the highest of all the buildings in the city. 'Guru Ka Langar' (free kitchen) was run there under the management of the Sikhs under the over-all guidance of the Guru. The idea was to serve food to all those who somehow could not earn their livelihood as also to those who gathered in the form of Sangat. The city provided an atmosphere for the new people to shape. It was in this context that Guru Ram Das spoke, "The city of Amritsar is the dwelling place of God, the symbol of goodness and greatness." In view of all this the city enjoyed deep respect of the Sikhs, but it was elevated to the

---

1. The Granth Sahib was ceremonially installed in the centre of the inner sanctuary on Bhadon Sudi 1, 1661 BK, August 16, 1604 A.D. Bhai Buddha opened it with reverence to obtain from it the divine command, as Guru Arjan stood in attendance behind.

premier status only in the eighteenth century under the impact of variegated historical forces and since then it has been enjoying that status despite many turmoils.

During the period of Guru Hargobind, the theme got further strengthened. He erected the Akal Takhat edifice opposite the entrance bridgehead of the Golden Temple upon which the Guru sat in state, wearing two swords of dominion over two worlds—temporal as well as spiritual. Many important decisions were taken at the Takhat. 'New Policy' was put into operation with vigour and system. The concept of double sovereignty took its birth here—the essence of which is a man of religion must always owe his primary allegiance to truth and morality, and he must never submit to the exclusive claim of the secular state to govern bodies. The association of the place with the four Gurus, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Hargobind who had their residence here was another factor to make the temple the premier and central one.

Guru Hargobind moved to Kiratpur in A.D. 1634 and since then except Guru Tegh Bahadur and he too for a short while, no Guru visited Amritsar. Even Guru Gobind Singh did not pay personal visit to this shrine. The control of the temple passed into the hands of 'Minas' (as the disciples and successors of Prithia were called) and they continued to exercise their control till they were driven out of the shrine and the control taken over by Bhai Mani Singh. During Guru Gobind Singh's time, Anandpur, because of the presence of the Guru himself and because of the birth-place of the Khalsa, shot up into prominence in the imagination of the Sikhs and almost all the activities sprang and were directed from this place. Golden Temple by virtue of the importance that Anandpur gained, shrank to subordinate position—the fact which is also supported by the fact that the Golden Temple was referred to only casually by the Guru or by any other person of note at his court. The lending of the status of the 'dwelling place' of the Khalsa to Anandpur also corroborates the aforesaid conclusion. During this period, the city of Amritsar as also the temple was without a guardian.<sup>1</sup> "It was like a boat without steward sailing in rough sea. It was hardly the size of a village with a few buildings around the tank and some mohallas scattered on the outer fringe of the township."

1. S.S. Bal, *Amritsar in the Eighteenth Century*.

After the passing away of Guru Gobind Singh, Banda Bahadur made Lohgarh his headquarter. He paid visit to Anandpur, Kiratpur and also Amritsar as some writers would have us believe. But upto the execution of Banda, Amritsar could not occupy the position of primacy. It was after Banda and during the period when Khalsa had to wage life and death struggle, first against the Mughals and then against the Afghans, who were determined to annihilate them root and branch, Harimandir complex including its adjunct places such as Akal Takhat, Bibeksar, Lachhmansar and Santokhsar assumed the foremost position. What particular factor emerged on the scene which helped Golden Temple to re-acquire the status? The first and foremost was the pronouncement of the tenth Guru which he made when he was on the verge of giving up his physical frame. He said that after him the Granth and Panth jointly would be considered as the Guru of the Sikhs.

As it is well known that Adi Granth, after having been prepared by the fifth Guru, Arjan Dev, had always been given presiding seat even in the presence of the Guru, the Sikh imagination at once turned to the Harimandir and for that matter Amritsar.

Secondly, the Harimandir and the tank of *Amrit* have been made sacred by having found place in the compositions incorporated in Guru Granth Sahib, and this being so, it is not difficult to understand that Golden Temple and its adjoining complex were held in deep veneration by the Sikhs.

The third factor, which helped Harimandir, its adjoining complex and Amritsar to assume the foremost place was the Panth which was not only a name given to the people having respect for the Sikh Gurus and Guru Granth Sahib and reposing full faith in their ideology, but also something more. It is an idea at once unifying and inspiring, of leading a distinctive corporate life. Besides this, it denotes a peculiar unity which is born out of the teachings of the Guru and the legacy they left behind and is nurtured and nursed by the common noble traditions and institutions built or to be built by the Sikh people as a whole during the course of history. Thus Panth is at one and the same time, an organisation, an idea and a unity.

After the death of Guru Gobind Singh and particularly after the death of Banda Bahadur, crucial stage in the life of the Sikhs came. How to fill the vacuum of leadership was the vital question which gripped the minds of the Sikhs. Here the concept of Panth



came to the help of the Sikhs. Panth, being sanctified as Guru in temporal matter, began to guide the destiny of the Sikhs. Since by Panth, it was meant the corporate living, the need arose how to ensure corporate actions. The answer was found that the Sikhs should meet at Harimandir at Amritsar two times a year, on the Baisakhi as well as Diwali days. This thing, obviously, increased the importance of the place.

Besides, historical circumstances also enhanced the prestige of the place. Since the greatest seat of Guru Granth and Guru Panth was at Harimandir complex at Amritsar, all the activities, political, social or religious, began to be concentrated there. The result was that the theo-political character of the place which was implicit although it was grounded in the spirit behind the Harimandir and its attached structures became explicit.

Now Harimandir with its attached structures became centre of the activities of the Sikhs, their spiritual and political capital.

Ever since 1721, the Golden Temple with the complex of attached structures has remained the centre of the Sikh world, the Sikh history, the Sikh politics and the Sikh theophany. In a meeting of the Khalsa in 1721, it was solemnly resolved that henceforth all the Sikhs should meet on Diwali and Baisakhi at Amritsar.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the history of the Sikhs whether the Sikhs were declared outlaws by the state, whether the Harimandir and its adjuncts were reduced to mass of ruins or they were forcibly occupied by the state, whether the Sikhs were sovereign people or politically subjugated, they have never abandoned or compromised the position that (1) the Golden Temple and its adjuncts are the hub of Sikh world not as a matter of concession by any worldly power but as the right of the Sikh people, *Sui generis* and inalienable and there is no ultimate dichotomy in the true Sikh doctrine between this world and the next, the secular and the religious, the political and the spiritual.

The Mughal authorities and later on the Afghans were fully aware of this fact and this was the reason they regarded it essential to demolish the said structures. For exactly the same reason, the Sikhs were very particular to guard their centre at all costs including the loss of their lives. In 1736, the Golden Temple and its adjuncts were occupied by the contemporary Government and

1. Kesar Singh Chhibbar, *Bansavli Nama* (manuscript in the Sikh History Department of Khalsa College, Amritsar), pp. 144-45.

were converted into central offices of the district officer, Mussalihal-Din, popularly known as Massa Rangar who was beheaded by Mehtab Singh in August 1740 to vindicate their assertion that structures would remain as the perennial centre of their activities. In 1746, the tank of Amritsar was filled with earth at the instance of Lakhpat Rai and his master Yahiya Khan. In March 1748, the Sikhs emerged from their hide-outs and drove away the occupation forces from the Golden Temple, built a mud fort to defend it, and reiterated that Golden Temple and allied structures were the indivisible part of the Sikhs.

In full realisation that, in the plains of Amritsar neither their fighting strength nor the flimsy protections of mud-walls could save them from sure destruction by the Mughals, they resolved that, no better death is conceivable for a Sikh than that which overtakes him, while defending the great cause of Sikhism at the centre of Sikhism. (Rattan Singh Bhangoo, *Prachin Panth Prakash*, Amritsar, 1914, p. 325).

In 1749, the Sikhs cleared the holy lake of Amritsar of the debris with which it was gutted by the Diwan Lakhpat Rai. In 1757, Ahmad Shah Abdali invaded India for the fourth time. He, finding the Sikhs a potent danger to his project, had the temple demolished, its adjuncts destroyed and its lake filled up and ploughed over. The Sikhs, however, refused to be cowed down, and in April 1758, when the combined forces of the Marathas and the Sikhs had succeeded in driving out of the country the Afghan occupation forces, the Golden Temple was rebuilt and its holy lake cleared up through the labour of the enemy's prisoners of war and under the direct supervision of famous Maratha chief Raghunath Rao and Malhar Rao Holkar, who then humbly made an offering of Rs. one hundred twenty-five thousand at the Golden Temple and received ceremonial robes of honour from its head priest. In November 1760, the Sikhs again assembled before Akal Takhat at the Golden Temple and declared themselves as the Sarbat Khalsa, a Sikh theo-political doctrine by which the Sikhs assumed the powers and status of the Centralised Conscience and will of the people resolved to take possession of Lahore, a project delayed somewhat by the fifth invasion of the Abdali, the same year. In 1762, the Abdali returned to India on his sixth invasion, with the specific object of liquidating the Sikhs completely and finally, of destroying their culture and spiritual roots and of extirpating of their very memory from the minds of the people, so that there

might remain no power in India cherishing the temerity of opposing him. In a lightning attack, this greatest of generals that Asia had produced, the Abdali put to sword a large portion of the Sikhs, at Kup near Ludhiana. Having done so, he proceeded to complete his task by blowing up the Golden Temple with gunpowder, destroyed its other adjuncts and filled the holy lake, after desecrating it 'with the blood of cows' (*A short History of the Sikhs* by Teja Singh, Dr. Ganda Singh, p. 171). The Abdali was so serious about all this that he got these operations carried out under his personal supervision, as a consequence of which he was wounded on the nose by a flying brick piece on April 10, 1762 which wound remained a festering incurable sore till he died of it on October 16, 1772 at Toba Mar in Suleman hills of Afghanistan. Shortly after this i.e. on the 17th October 1762, more than sixty thousand Sikhs assembled at the ruins of the Golden Temple to challenge and chastise the Abdali for the arrogant sacrilege he had committed. Offers of peace and negotiations made by Abdali were contemptuously and summarily rejected by the Sikhs, and they inflicted a signal defeat on him and forced him to retire towards Lahore, and thus the Sikhs sought to vindicate that they were not prepared to lose Golden Temple and the complex of buildings attached to it. Charat Singh, the grandfather of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was then placed in charge for restoring and rebuilding the Golden Temple and its holy lake. On the call given by the Khalsa, the Sikhs of Amritsar immediately collected money and built Harimandir on its earlier plinth at a cost of Rs. 970000.<sup>1</sup> In October, 1764, Ahmad Shah Abdali invaded India for the seventh time and on December 1, 1764 he paid a military visit to the Golden Temple to satisfy himself that the Sikhs no longer used this spot for political activities. He found thirty Sikhs standing guard at the entrance-gate of the Golden Temple under the captaincy of Jathedar Gurbakhsh Singh, whose mausoleum still stands behind the Akal Takhat. 'They were only thirty in number; but they had not a grain of fear about them..... They were resolved to sacrifice their lives for the Guru (page 100, Muslim eye witness, the author of *Jang Namah*, 1766).' In April 1765, after the return of the Afghan invader, the Sikhs again restored to themselves the Golden Temple and its adjuncts including Akal Takhat. Retracing his steps to Kabul in 1764, Abdali never again crossed the Indus. The Khalsa was

1. Gyani Gian Singh, *Tarikh-i-Amritsar* (Patiala, reprint 1923, p. 40).

triumphant and its sovereignty over the whole of the Punjab undisputed. The Khalsa only confirmed this fact next year. It attacked Lahore and brought the Zamzama to Amritsar and issued Gobind Shahi and later Nanak Shahi coins. Since then, the Golden Temple and other structures attached to it have always been the hub of activities of the Sikhs. They have always been the capital of the ultimate allegiance of the Sikhs. Amritsar became the capital of the Khalsa with almost all Misl chiefs having their *Bingas* there. They started building the Amritsar township afresh in common as a consequence of the resolve taken on the Baisakhi of 1765. They pooled their resources and renovated and rebuilt the Darbar Sahib. They appointed regular 'granthis' (scripture reciter) for the recitation of the holy Granth there and decided upon religious codes some of which are in vogue even now.<sup>1</sup>

The continuous and long-drawn-out death and life struggle for the resolve that they were not prepared to lose Golden Temple and its allied structures also made a significant contribution to assigning the premier place to the temple and even to the city where it was located.

This thing landed marrow-deep among the Sikh people. No wonder, Harimandir and for that matter, even the city of Amritsar became vital chord of the Sikh psyche, doing the twin service of shaping it and providing the material of the psyche. This fact is borne out very clearly by Ahmad Shah Batalvi in his book *Kitah-i-Hind*. He vouchsafes that Amritsar had become very popular for the Sikhs who considered it a sacred act to visit Harimandir and have a dip in the tank, named Amritsar. As soon as the Sardars entered the precincts of the city their mutual animosities ended; and they sat as one body listening to the 'Path' (recitation of the Guru Granth Sahib) and pondered upon the problems faced by 'Sarbat Khalsa' and upon the schemes meant for the betterment of the community.

To spend any amount on the city gave them spiritual satisfaction and the feeling of elevation. Amritsar, therefore, became the centre of all the activities of the Sikhs. (Page 14, *Tarikh-i-Punjab* translated by Gurbakhsh Singh, Punjabi University).

---

1. H.R. Gupta, *History of the Sikhs* (Punjabi Edition), p. 194.

## Chapter 23

# SIKH PRAYER

Another important legacy which the eighteenth century left for the Sikhs was the prayer which is unique in respect of composition, content, and the role it has been playing in the history of the Sikhs. To appreciate it properly and objectively, it will be useful to discuss it in all its aspects.

Prayer, generally speaking, has always been a very important part of all religions and so the Sikh religion cannot be exception to this rule. The Sikh conception of God is personal. He moves in Him like a fish in the water. He is in constant communion with Him through prayer. Therefore, prayer is much used in Sikhism. The scriptures consist chiefly of prayers. No ceremony, whether religious or secular is complete without prayer; nay, most of the ceremonies and rituals contain nothing else except prayer. Before going on a journey or opening a shop or occupying a new house, a Sikh opens the Holy Book and asks God's blessings. Often, if time and his means permit, he also arranges for the singing of hymns of 'thanks-giving'. But he will never omit a short prayer, which even the poorest can afford.

In these pages, however, we are concerned with the formal prayer as it was developed in the eighteenth century and which, with only a few adaptations, has been in vogue since then. This prayer was not the work of any one man or any one time. The whole Sikh nation had been at work on it for centuries. The custom of offering Prayers is as old as Sikhism itself; but by the time of Guru Arjan Dev the fifth successor of Guru Nanak, when Adi Granth had been installed in places of worship, it became an established rule to gather together for the purpose of praying in congregations. According to the *Dabistan-i-Mazahab*, when anybody wanted a gift from Heaven, he would come to such an assembly of Sikhs and ask them to pray for him. Even the Guru asked his Sikhs to intercede for him. Familiar expressions of prayer began to accumulate until by the time of Guru Gobind Singh, a

definite form was given to it. What exactly the form was during Guru Gobind Singh's time, nothing definitive can be said. However, it can be surmised that the first six lines and the last two lines were positively there. In addition to these, the person praying for the congregation could express his innermost thoughts or the conjectured ideas of the whole congregation in his own words. No standard form of these words came into being and even upto now this portion of the prayer depends on the person offering prayer. The portion from line 7 to line 25 of the standard prayer is solely the work of Sikh community as a whole and these were composed by generations of the Sikhs, as events of their history went on leaving their impression on their minds. The community even now has not abdicated its right of moulding this part of the prayer. It can refer in any suitable term to the present-day difficulties and sorrows of the Panth etc., etc. To all probability major part of this portion was composed by Bhai Mani Singh. One thing, however, is certain that towards the close of the fifties of the eighteenth century, the standard form of prayer was in vogue. Later on in the 19th and 20th centuries excepting a few additions to express the gratitude to the martyrs of Gurdwara Reform Movement or certain other sorrows which the Panth had experienced, no change has been effected. As the things stand today, the first seven and the last two lines, can in no case be altered or omitted. In all other lines, changes can be made. We can shorten, omit, add to or do anything with them.

As a piece of composition, as a presentation of Sikh ethos as it was and as it ought to be, as a historical document, as a means to provide adhesive to the nation and as an instrument to keep up the spirit of the nation as also to ensure organic growth, Sikh prayer is unique.

As a piece of composition, it is one of the rareties of literature, being intensively expressive, poignantly meaningful, remarkably concise and precise and immensely communicative and elevating. Each word in itself is a thought, an image and a homage rolled into one. In its appeal, it goes straight to heart, in its impression it is as deep as the innermost recess of the heart. It is a congealed form of noble emotions and aspirations of Sikhs, and it has ennobling effect beyond grasp of human reason.

A cursory glance at its corpus would make it clear that it mirrors the Sikh ethos. How a Sikh wishes first to invoke his Guru in whom the highest ideal of godliness was realised, the five Loved



Ones, who for their sacrifice were invested with collective guruship by the last Guru, then the Guru's sons who bravely met martyrdom and, though young, kept up the brave tradition of their forefathers; then other great men and women, who wore arms and practised charity, and in the face of unspeakable sufferings, kept their faith insulated. After communing himself with God revealed in history and reverently watching the organic growth of divinity in mankind, how he wishes to contribute his mite towards the ultimate goal of Sikhism "the welfare of mankind as a whole." To do so, he also wishes to steep himself in the company of those in whose association, he might be able to keep his faith in precipitated form. Considering himself as a part of the Panth as a whole, a Sikh can seek the benediction of God for the fulfilment of his individual demands and needs; but these can not go counter to the interest of the Sikhs as a corporate body.

All this being so, Prayer has shaped the Sikh ethos as well. Since everything is uttered in the form of prayer which is a request made before God or the subject you worship, it shapes it also. So Sikh prayer presents, as well as shapes the Sikh Ethos at one and the same time. It is presentative as well as educative.

The authors of prayer very intelligently made many telling historical events as an integral part of it. In selecting the events for their incorporation in the prayer, care seems to have been taken that these should be noble and sublime and might be a supplement to the Sikh doctrines. This is the reason that while prayer had been handed down from the days of the conflict with the Muhammadans in which the Sikhs suffered martyrdom that are enumerated in it, yet nowhere is shown any sign of bitterness or revenge and there is no reproach or curse on the enemy. These events obviously are a great help to the persons engaged in the pursuit of writing history of the Sikhs and that of the Sikh religion. According to some writers, "It (prayer) is the crystallisation of the history of the Sikh Nation."

Moreover, Sikh prayer is macro, not only in the composition of its language, but also in the nature of its subject matter. The Sikh, while offering it, is made to realise that he is a part of the corporated body called the Panth or the Khalsa whose past and present history is recounted with all its sacrifices, successes, glories and needs. The Sikhs are further made to appreciate the part played and to be played by the Sikh choirs, banners and the mansions, thrones of religious authority, theo-political centre of

Amritsar, as also their resolve to establish the kingdom of justice and to ensure the well-being of the whole mankind.

Thus the Sikh prayer ensures organic unity by linking the past deeds with the present generations. Besides this, it refreshes the faith of the Sikhs in their institutions and their ideals, and by doing so, it has always functioned as adhesive among the Sikh people. This function was more appreciated in the eighteenth century when the Panth was subjected to different stresses and Panthic unity was in awful danger.

The Sikh prayer, being more corporate in spirit as well as in content, has always promoted corporate sense in the community. But it should not be misunderstood that Sikhism did so at the cost of the individuals who have always been given dignified status and it was generally realised that without the regeneration of the individuals, corporate being could not be improved. It was, therefore, made incumbent for the individual to shed off lust, greed, wrath, worldly attachment and pride and sentences to this effect were incorporated in the prayer. But this purely macro approach was not regarded sufficient for the uplift of the people and in this context, corporate approach was followed but in no case individuals were ignored. Sikhism is a scheme of integrated development of human personalities to enable them to consider themselves as part of corporate body as its dignified adjuncts.

Because of the aforesaid functions of the prayer, the Sikhs of the eighteenth century were benefitted a lot. Prayer gave them requisite inspiration, kept the fire burning and the ideals close to their hearts and intellect, moulded their psychology, sociology, soteriology towards unity. It also kept alive in their consciousness the memories of their martyrs and heroes, thereby stimulating them to be heroic and crusaders of the cause with the result the eighteenth century successfully braved the apparently fatal attacks on their existence much more on their faith and the ideology, they championed and protagonised. It also kept up the zeal to spread the mission of Guru Nanak as it closes with the note to work for the spread of the mission of Guru Nanak. This missionary work is to be carried on with due regard to other's rights and sentiments, for in the next line it is made clear that the good of everybody without distinction of caste or creed will be taken care of.

As it is in the modern times so in the eighteenth century no priest was required to offer prayer and anybody, man or woman, old and young, could conduct it.

## The Sikh Prayer

One absolute manifest, victory belongeth to the wondrous destroyer of darkness. May the might of All-powerful help!

Ode to his might by the tenth Lord.

1. Having first remembered God the Almighty, think of Guru Nanak!
2. Then of Angad Guru, and Amar Das and Ram Das; may they be our rescuers!
3. Remember Arjan, Hargobind and the holy Har Rai!
4. Let us think of the holy Harikrishan, whose sight dispels all sorrow!
5. Let us remember Tegh Bahadur, and the nine treasures shall come hastening to our homes!
6. May they all assist us everywhere!
7. May the Tenth King, the holy Guru Gobind Singh, the lord of hosts and protector of the faith, assist us everywhere!
8. Turn your thoughts, O Khalsa, to Guru Granth Sahib, embodiment of the light of ten lordships and think of the view and reading of it.

(Waheguru—Wonderful Lord!)

9. The five Beloved Ones, the master's four sons, the forty Saved-Ones, and other righteous, steadfast and long-suffering souls; think of their deeds and call on God!

(Waheguru—Wonderful Lord!)

10. Those men and women who, keeping the Name to their Hearts shared their earnings with others; who plied the sword and practised charity; who saw others' faults, but overlooked them; think of their deeds and call on God!

(Waheguru—Wonderful Lord!)

11. Those who for their religion allowed themselves to be cut up limb by limb, had their scalps scraped off, were broken on the wheel, were sawn or flayed alive; think of their sweet resignation and call on God!

(Waheguru—Wonderful Lord!)

12. Those who, to purge the temples of long-standing evils, suffered themselves to be ruthlessly beaten or imprisoned, to be shot, cut up, or burnt alive with kerosene oil, but did not make any resistance or utter even a sigh of complaint; think of their patient faith and call on God!

(Waheguru—Wonderful Lord!)

13. Think of all the different temples, thrones of religious authority, and other places hallowed by the touch of the Guru's feet, and call on God!  
(Waheguru—Wonderful Lord!)
14. Now the whole Khalsa offers his prayer!
15. Let the whole Khalsa bring to his mind the Name of the Wonderful Lord!
16. And as he thinks of Him; may he feel completely blessed!
17. May God's protection and grace extend to all the people!
18. May the Lord's glory be fulfilled, and His dispensation prevail!
19. May victory attend our Charity and our Arms!
20. May God's sword help us!
21. May the Khalsa always triumph!
22. May the Sikh choirs, banners, mansions abide for ever and ever!
23. The kingdom of justice come!
24. May the Sikhs be united in love!
25. May the hearts of the Sikhs be humble, but their wisdom exalted—their wisdom in the keeping of the Lord! O Khalsa, say the Lord is wonderful.  
(Waheguru—Wonderful Lord!)
26. O true King! O loved Father! in these ambrosial hours of the morning we have sung Thy sweet hymns, heard Thy life-giving Word, and have discoursed on Thy manifold blessings. May these things find a loving place in our hearts and serve to draw our souls towards Thee!
27. Save us, O Father, from lust, wrath, greed, worldly attachment and pride; and keep us always attached to Thy feet!
28. Grant to thy Sikhs the gift of Sikhism, the gift of Thy Name, the gift of faith, the gift of confidence in Thee, and the gift of reading and understanding Thy holy word!
29. O kind Father, loving Father, through Thy mercy we have spent the night in peace and happiness; may Thy grace extend to our labours of the day too, so that we may, according to Thy will, do what is right!

30. Give us light, give us understanding, so that we may know what pleaseth Thee !
31. We offer this prayer in Thy presence, O wonderful Lord :
32. Forgive us for our sins. Help us to keep ourselves pure.
33. Bring us into the fellowship of only those men of love, in whose company we may remember Thy Name.
34. Through Nanak may Thy Name for ever be on the increase;  
And may all men prosper by Thy grace.  
Hail Khalsa of the wonderful Lord, who is always victorious !

## Chapter 24

# POLITICAL IDEALS AND BEHAVIOUR

The eighteenth century Sikhs had to wage grim struggle against the contemporary state which, in its turn, was determined to annihilate the Sikhs in toto. How did the Sikhs politically react and what political thought-current inspired them during the course of this struggle is the object of the study of this chapter.

As the century opens, we find Guru Gobind Singh engaged in war against the combined forces of Subedar Wazir Khan of Sirhind, the Subedar of Lahore and the Hill Chieftains. He had to carry out his fight till the battle of Mukatsar when the Mughal forces were repulsed and were compelled to retire. After this, the Guru exchanged letters with Aurangzeb and started towards the Deccan to see Aurangzeb for finding enduring solution to the discord estranging the relations between the state and the Sikhs. As he got the news of the death of Aurangzeb at Khiltanpur, he extended his help and blessing to Prince Muazzam, to be known as Bahadur Shah, as he had known him as endowed with liberal propensities and patron of Bhai Nand Lal, one of the most loved disciples of the Guru. The Guru's disciples are said to have taken part in the battle of Jojau which decided once for all the succession to the throne of India in favour of Bahadur Shah. The Emperor honoured the Guru by offering him costly robe and other valuable gifts. Soon after Bahadur Shah had to move to the Deccan via Rajasthan to settle the affairs of his empire, the Guru also moved alongwith him.

Which political impulse was working at that time is not difficult to perceive. The Guru upto this time made himself amply clear regarding the Sikh attitude if the state was bent upon putting an end to the Sikh way of life. The Guru had a mission and he wanted that to be translated into reality. He had his own world-view and the Sikhs were accordingly being moulded. The state of Aurangzeb was absolutist theo-monist not prepared to tolerate



the Sikhs or other non-Muslims and non-Sunnies—the fact which is embodied in different laws of Aurangzeb. The Sikhs, under the guidance and direction of their Gurus, were tutored to regard themselves as distinctive group surcharged with ethos and culture of their own. They refused to be cowed down. They asserted that they owed their primary allegiance to truth and morality and they would never submit to the exclusive claim of the secular state to govern the bodies and minds of men. The tenth Guru explained the aforesaid view in the following words of 'Zafarnama' :

"When all means of peaceful persuasions fail, it is legitimate (for a man of religion) to move his hand to the hilt of the sword."

From this it is clear that the tenth Guru considered it his duty never to submit to the exclusive claim of the secular state to be all powerful in all spheres of human activities. Even before Guru Gobind Singh, Guru Hargobind had given such views. The erection of Akal Takhat meant the seat of supreme power and wearing of two swords signified dominion over two worlds, seen and unseen. In a way, the sixth Guru proclaimed that the Guru was the supreme direction-giving authority of both the aforesaid worlds and the state can exercise the authority only to the extent it did not clash with the affairs of the Sikhs as ordained by the Guru. After the death of Guru Gobind Singh the supreme authority of Guru passed on to the 'Panth' and 'Granth' conjointly. 'Panth' which meant the totality of the people having faith in Sikh religion now began to exercise that authority. To express it in another way, the Sikh people began to consider themselves with a feeling as a distinctive agglomeration of the persons upholding certain pattern of spirito-social values and embodying distinct ethos, and very much determined to develop themselves in their own ways, without any interference or impositions from any quarter—even from state. In the modern political parleys, the Sikhs protagonised the doctrine of Double Sovereignty. The main substance of this doctrine is that any sovereign state which includes Sikh population and groups as citizens must never make the paranoiac pretensions of almighty absolutism entailing the concept of total power entitled to rule over the bodies and minds of men, in utter exclusiveness. Any state which lays such claims, qua the Sikhs shall automatically forfeit its moral right to demand allegiance of the Sikhs, and there is thus an eternal antagonism between such a state and the community of the Sikhs, represented by the Order of

the Khalsa and in this deadly duel, the state shall never emerge out as finally victorious, for, self-destruction is the fruit of the seed of non-limitation, and the status and the prerogatives of the Khalsa are imprescriptible. This being so, the Sikhs always insisted that any state fit and entitled to demand their allegiance must *ab initio* recognise and concede its own self-limited character arising out of the principles of morality, the teachings of religion, the principles of abstract justice, the principles of the Sikhs' metalegal constitution which lays down that (i) they must be approached and dealt with at state level as a collective group and entity and (ii) they must be governed impartially, that is through the rule of law and not by arbitrary will and this self-limitation may be further circumscribed by the immemorial customs, long-established tradition and facts of the history of the Sikhs.

The Sikh doctrine as delineated above is, in essence, the same which today finds explicit expression in the modern concept of the pluralistic state, which recognises that the state, in practice, is the government and the government is no more than a group in control of the governmental machinery and that the aims and objects of this group may, any time, clash with those of other groups, not in power. The Government may be the temporary principle of all such groups, but it is only *primus-inter-pares*, the elder among the equals; it is not the sole repository of power or focal of loyalty. This is indeed the sole essence of the Sikh doctrine of Double Sovereignty which finds powerful support in the writings of Professor Harold J. Laske, Mr. G.D.H. Cole and the French jurist, Duguit and also Dr. J.N. Figgies.

As a matter of fact, the struggle of the Sikhs in the 17th and 18th centuries, against the Mughal state stemmed from their will to assert their doctrine of Double Sovereignty against the Muslim absolutist theo-monist theory of state as a result of which the Sikhs had to pass through the valley of death, as just a glance over the narrative in the foregoing pages would amply bear out.

In 1708, Guru Gobind Singh initiated a Hindu Yogi and Occultist, Madho Das Bairagi, as a Sikh and renamed him Banda Singh and then appointed him the generalissimo of the Sikhs, after conferring upon him the military title 'Bahadur'. Banda Singh Bahadur was then ordered to proceed to Punjab with the assignment of due chastisement of the Mughal rulers, who had usurped the power that belonged to the people, condign punishment of those guilty of atrocities, destruction of their

military bases and re-establishment of the freedom of the people. Banda Singh carried out his assignment with admirable fidelity, and in 1710 declared the freedom of the province of Sirhind, fixed as its capital the fortified Mukhlaspur in the hills, near Ambala, and the Sikhs adopted the legend on their seal which began :

"We hereby place our impress of sovereignty upon both the worlds, the seen and the unseen and thus they reiterated the basic doctrine of Sikhism, that of Double Sovereignty."

During the short period of the rule of Banda, the state was administered as per the concept of the double sovereignty. Whatever the Sikhs demanded for themselves, they conceded to all people including the Muslims. It is in this perspective that the Muslims were not maltreated at all; rather they were allowed to enjoy their rights and privileges as a distinctive culture-group, provided they shed off their concept of theo-monistic state.

After the collapse of the political power of the Sikhs under Banda in 1716, the state initiated their persecution in a systematic manner either to cow them down to compromise with their political doctrine or to smash them out of existence.

The Sikhs, as a result, suffered a lot but they remained unshaken so far as their doctrine was concerned. In 1733, finding that extreme measures of persecution had failed to persuade the Sikhs to compromise their basic doctrines and attitudes offered to concede to the Sikhs the status of the sub-nation, and autonomous political status with a Jagir, comprising the parganas of Dipalpur, Kanganwal and Jhabal of which the total income was about a hundred thousand rupees.

A lot of discussion took place on the point whether the status offered to the Sikhs might be accepted. The views of Darbara Singh, one of the greatest Sikh leaders of the day, eloquently demonstrated the political thought-current surging deep in the hearts of the Khalsa. Darbara Singh said, "What is a Nawabship to us, who have been promised a kingdom by the Guru? The word of the Guru must be fulfilled. The Khalsa meant to rule freely, cannot accept a subordinate position. Then it was presented to other leaders, but they too were unwilling. At last it was suggested that it should be given to some one noted for service. Kapur Singh Faizulpuria, who was then waving a big fan over the assembly was selected for the honour. He accepted it but not before it had been sanctified by the touch of the "five Khalsas' feet". (Refer to

*Prachin Panth Prakasb* by Rattan Singh Bhangu, pp. 197-200).

From the above it emerges that the Khalsa accepted Jagir and along with it the status of sub-nation only as a temporary measure, just to have a breathing time to replenish their resources. They were not at all in a mood to surrender their political doctrine, and their basic political postulates constituting the same.

Hence the Sikhs, without any loss of time, addressed themselves to strengthening and refashioning their organisation. It was during this short period that Taruna Dal, the army of the Sikh youth, came into being, the faith of Sikhs in Sikh ideology was reinvigorated and the rationale of the struggle was made known to the people on a larger scale. Shortly after, the Khalsa renewed their anti-state activities to which the state reacted sharply and aggressively, with the result, that the Jagir was forfeited and the roving bands of the soldiers were commissioned to smash the Sikhs wherever they were found. The conflict between the Sikhs and the state manned in the first instance by the Mughals and then by the Afghans carried on till finally the Sikhs came out victorious and established their political hegemony over the whole of Punjab. In A.D. 1765, to all intents and purposes, the Sikhs had achieved their object of bringing the state under their control, thereby giving a fatal blow to the intransigence of the state towards the political doctrine of double sovereignty.

When the Sikhs settled as rulers around 1765, they respected the doctrine, at least by and large, and applied it even to the people other than the Sikhs. It is in this context that they were tolerant even towards the Muslims who had harmed them considerably. It was because of this general policy that all sorts of people—Hindus, Muslims and Christians—loved the Sikh Sardars and trusted them for their welfare. So was the attitude of the Sikh chieftains.

After having discussed the political theory propping, sustaining and encouraging the Sikhs of the eighteenth century, the next question which springs is: What was the pattern on the behavioural plane? Were they the people embodying democratic values and surcharged with the democratic spirit or were they inclining towards monarchical values? The Sikhs, throughout their formative period from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh were continuously made to realise that they formed the microcosm of macrocosm and if they regenerated themselves and practised the programme as laid down by the Gurus they were very honourable

and collectively they were as good as the Guru himself—even superior to him. By passing on physical Guruship to the Panth, the Sikhs were made fully responsible and divine. Such people, fully awakened to their inherent potentialities and responsibility, could not but afford the democratic spirit. They, thus loathed the idea of deifying any individual or glorification of any person which might lead to the growth of personality cult. The institutions of 'Langar', 'Sangat' and 'the Khalsa' also nourished democratic ideals. The Sikhs, for the greater part of the eighteenth century, were zealous about holding the democratic ideals aloft. The author of *Futubat-Nama-i-Samadhi* avers that Banda was not unhampered while taking important decision at crucial moments of their struggle by his own followers. He bowed to the majority decisions while deciding about the offer of a negotiated settlement made to them by Abdus Samad Khan.

The Sikhs were uncompromisingly hostile to any individual attempting at concentrating power in his own hands or seeking elevation at the cost of Khalsa. When Zakariya Khan offered to grant Jagir to the Sikhs with his assumed object to conciliate them to his rule, the Sikhs took care to give it to Kapur Singh, who was considered as the humblest servant of the Khalsa. He was invested with the Supreme Command of the Dal Khalsa. Territorial conquests too had started gradually pouring in but neither he himself nor the Khalsa looked upon him as anything more than the first among equals.

The biggest proof of the resistance of the Sikhs to allow concentration of power in the hands of a single individual lay in their calling of special meeting of the Gurmata to consider the situation arising out of the Jassa Singh Ahluwalia's attempt at circulating stamped money bearing his own name as inscription, into the bazaars. However unsophisticated the Sikhs might have been, the implication of the circulation of stamped money in his personal name was not lost sight of by those people who had earlier bestowed upon him the title of 'Sultan-ul-Qaum'. They instead showed a wonderful awareness of political implications of the nature of the title. Jassa Singh was given the title of Sultan-ul-Qaum, and not of 'Sultan-ul-Mulk' because the latter exuded the smell of monarchical power. By the grant of the title of Sultan-ul-Mulk, the Sikhs would have ceased to be democratic in behaviour.

When Jassa Singh Ahluwalia sought to project different image



among the people by circulating coins, bearing his name as inscription on them, the apprehensions of the Sikhs were aroused immediately and they reacted sharply. According to Budh Singh Arora, a contemporary writer, the Sikhs summoned a meeting of the Gurmata and in that specially convened meeting, the concerned coin bearing Jassa Singh Ahluwalia's name was brusquely withdrawn and in its place was issued another coin bearing the name of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh.

Ahmad Shah Abdali's offer of the Governorship of Lahore to Lehna Singh Bhangi was politely declined by the latter as this would have meant the transfer of sovereignty from the Khalsa to Ahmad Shah Abdali which was not acceptable to the Sikh Chief. As a matter of fact, the Sikh masses were poignantly conscious of their respect for sovereignty and supremacy of the Khalsa as such. Even the Chiefs, at least upto the late eighteenth century, respected democratic values.

As it has been vouchsafed in the foregoing paragraphs that the Sikhs were democratic in behaviour and attitude, the organisations which they threw up also bore the stamp of democracy. Sarbat Khalsa, Gurmata, Sangat—all operated in a manner which was democratic in the sense that the voice of the whole Panth was given attention and actions taken in that light. Dal Khalsa was an army of the Khalsa and not of any individual. Sarbat Khalsa was the convention of the whole Sikh people which met twice a year at Amritsar, on the Baisakhi and the Diwali. They chose a leader by a majority of votes but barely allowed him the dignity of *primus inter pares* during his temporary elevation. The confederation was called Khalsa ji. In civil life there was complete social equality amongst the Sikhs. In the meetings of the Sarbat Khalsa, everyone could freely express his opinion. The decisions were by a majority of votes. Gurmata was the resolution of the Sarbat Khalsa, represented by the leaders of the Misl. All these institutions contained democratic element in ample measure although democracy did not exist in western sense. The internal organisation of the Misl also bears out the same conclusion.

"The Misls were the confederacies of equals. A Sikh disdained to acknowledge any earthly superior. The Sardar was no doubt obeyed, but there was no obligation to obey beyond what they might consider to be for their own reciprocal benefit or for the well-being of the Misl."

Because of the democratic spirit and posture of the



institutions, the institutions endured for quite a long time.

The Sikhs never liked monarchy—as an ideal or even good form of government. This attitude of theirs was in keeping with the socio-political philosophy as propounded and preached by the Gurus. In this connection, Dr. Bhagat Singh's views are pertinent. He says that Guru Nanak advocated the institution of monarchical democracy and that institution of kingship was always there right from the days of Banda Singh to Dalip Singh.<sup>1</sup>

The facts at our disposal do not warrant the justification of such views. "They rather establish the un-reserved and unequivocal opposition of the Sikhs to the institution of kingship. It is not correct to attribute to Guru Nanak the idea of establishing 'monarchy' in the country. Guru Nanak's severe criticism against contemporary rulers for their atrocities on their hapless subjects and his bitterest attack on the misdeeds of their administrative officials do not serve as an index of his acceptance of the institution. If they do not represent the repudiation of the institution of kingship, they at least do not reveal his preference for the same. If Guru Nanak's scathing criticism of the Mughal monarch did not evoke similar response from Babar, the target of his criticism, Guru Tegh Bahadur's fearless preaching of 'fear not, frighten not' did; the cause could not be traced to any lack of intensity in the criticism, which it had none but to the shaky foundation upon which the Mughal monarchy itself had been founded. Guru Nanak's criticism was a direct challenge to the Mughal monarchy. He escaped reprisal only because the monarchy itself lacked firm roots in the land and confidence in itself. Similarly, any reference to the guidelines suggested by the first Guru and the restrictions recommended upon the conduct of the ruler should not lead any one to the belief that the Guru made the recommendations because he accepted the validity of the institutions. The universality of these suggestions and recommendations do not permit of its exclusive applicability to the kings. They are as relevant even today for any ruler whether in democracy, monarchy or military dictatorship, as they were in the past.

Sometimes the validity of the acceptance of Kingship by the Sikhs and their Gurus has sought to be proved by a reference to Guru Hargobind's casual remark about himself in a chance meeting

---

1. Dr. Bhagat Singh, *The Sikh Polity*, an unpublished Thesis, p. 235.

with the Maratha Saint, Samrath Ram Das that 'internally he was a saint but externally he was a prince'. If the title of prince signifies anything more than what the title 'Sachia Padshah' for the Sikh Gurus signifies, then it surely demonstrates the Sikh Guru's antagonism to the institution of Kingship rather than its acceptance. Calling their Gurus True Kings should in fact be treated as a convincing proof of the Sikhs' antagonism to the reigning monarchs rather than their acceptance. In the statement one finds an unwrapped and unconcealed denunciation of the institution of Kingship which had failed to come up to the expectations of the people. Guru Gobind Singh also did not uphold the principles of monarchy. The Khalsa was infused with a spirit of democratic idealism divorced completely from any tendency of deification of any individual or glorification of any person which would lead to the growth of personality cult. The single fact, that Guru Gobind Singh sought 'Pahul' from his disciples whom he had already administered the same, is a sufficient proof of the extinction of any difference of status between the Guru and the disciples. Guru Gobind Singh's seeking of 'Pahul' from his disciples whom he had already administered the same, his pronouncement of investing the Khalsa with the status of Guru—both these facts lucidly demonstrate the democratic views of the Guru. The Sikhs of the eighteenth century did not go against the heritage of the Gurus and showed no hesitation in dealing ruthlessly and effectively with such situations, allowing no encroachment upon the citadel of sovereignty since they finally believed that it rested with the Khalsa and not with any individual. Some scholars have held on the unreliable evidence of Kesar Singh Chhibber and Ganesh Das Wadehra that Banda was a monarch or Badshah. This view is obviously unfounded as there is contemporary evidence to the contrary. Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din suggests very clearly that Banda bowed to the decision of the majority. The absence of unrestricted power in deciding about momentous decisions of life and death reduced Banda to the status of a military chief entrusted with the supreme command to deal only with a particular situation. The actual sovereignty rested with the Khalsa. If there is any semblance of truth in the almost doubtful suggestion that Banda attempted to show the least deviation from the democratic aspiration of the Khalsa, it is also true that the Khalsa promptly gave him rebuff strong enough to make him acknowledge the principle of the

sovereignty of the Khalsa. This is evidenced by his conciliation with the Sarbat Khalsa in accepting martyrdom with the greatest grace and utmost unconcern alongwith the other members of the Khalsa. In view of all this, it is wrong to regard Banda Bahadur as a monarch. The Sikh Chiefs were also not kings, as some would suggest.

Had this been so, there would have been sixty-five kings—each being the Chieftain of a Misl. The Sikh Chieftains rendered obedience to the Sarbat Khalsa through the Gurmata and acting in concert against external enemies and internal crisis. It would be absurd to assume, as some of the scholars suggest that restricted internal autonomy and a voluntary response for a limited action against the internal and external threats to the Khalsa were only minor curbs. These, in fact, destroyed the basis of sovereignty indispensable for every King.

Towards the last three decades of the eighteenth century, the tendency towards the Kingship began to gather strength. The reasons are not far to seek. The foreign danger being practically over after 1765, the Sikh Chieftains found that there was no need of pulling together, and began to indulge in the pursuits which their individual interests warranted. The objective of acquiring cohesion and ensuring progress through democratic institutions and operations lost importance to them; and they started their work to concentrate powers in their own hands—at times caring little for the opinion of the majority of their brethren. They very adroitly began to arrogate to themselves the powers of a monarch. Each of Sardars plunged himself into struggle for supremacy over others. Personal resentment and personal aggrandisement became all-important factors. They degenerated from self-sacrificing fighters for the national cause into self-seeking leaders.

Still they hesitate to band their claim of Kingship....They ungrudgingly behaved in a manner which did not clash with democratic ideas. "They squatted on the ground in the midst of their subjects, plainly dressed, unattended by an escort, without any paraphernalia of Government, talking, laughing and joking as if with their comrades using no diplomacy with them but having straightforward dealing, simple manners, upright mind and sincere language."<sup>1</sup>

Yet, the democratic ideals and the institution suffered great

---

1. Dr. H.R. Gupta.

strain the intensity of which increased to a very high degree during Ranjit Singh, who ultimately established Kingship. But his approach to the attainment of his objective was very cautious and overt. He took extra care not to give any ostensible cause for offence to the Khalsa. He accepted the title of Maharaja from the citizens of Lahore in 1804 but rarely made spectacular use of the same. His letters to the Sikh Chiefs rarely carried the title. He never minted coins in his own name. His official seal did not bear his name. He never occupied throne. He showed not only reverence but even subservience to Akali Phula Singh, the extremist leader of the Akalis and Jathedar of Akal Takhat. He would invariably leave his seat to honour the Sikh missionaries. He called his government Sarkar-i-Khalsaji. He never allowed his court historian Sohan Lal to prefix the title of Maharaja with his name.

Simultaneous to all this, he made use of the power of the Khalsa to establish his power over the length and breadth of the trans-Sutlej Punjab; he eroded the effectiveness of the institutions such as Sarbat Khalsa and Gurmata. He built counterpoise by collecting round himself and in the court such element that was akin in political thinking to the Maharaja. The Brahmanical ascendancy and the acquisition of power on the part of the Dogras were made possible only because Ranjit Singh found in them the sort of overflowing willingness to further the monarchical interest of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

The unsuspecting Sikhs could not perceive the true import of the subtle moves of the Maharaja to subvert the democratic thinking and institutions of the Sikhs. Ranjit Singh's astute diplomacy and pretended loyalty to the ideals of Khalsa had, of course, lulled the Sikhs to a peaceful sleep. Besides the liquidation of great Sikh Sardars found it difficult to understand the real motives behind Ranjit Singh's secret ambitions; and when they understood it, they found themselves helpless to do anything in this direction because of complex situation which had arisen because of the external enemies and internal conspirators. The basic principle of the supremacy of the brotherhood of the Khalsa remained unchanged though Ranjit Singh had actually pushed it so deep into the background that the feeble attempts of the brotherhood for the restoration of the state through the effective revival of their democratic ideals, met with no success.

## Chapter 25

# CONFIGURATION OF SIKH SOCIETY EMERGENCE OF NEW CASTE HIERARCHY

To appreciate the exact extent of the impact of Sikhism on the people, it will be sufficiently rewarding to conduct probe into the composition of the people forming Sikh society. Sikhism from its very start attracted towards it the people of diverse sections or cultures about which the exact statistics are not available, yet the veracity of the thesis can be testified by Bhai Gurdas, the maternal uncle of Guru Arjan Dev. He, in his eleventh Var, gives a list of individual Sikhs, beginning with followers of Guru Nanak and terminating with the sixth Guru, Hargobind. In most cases, the caste name is given and we are thus provided with important evidence concerning the constituency of Panth during first century of its existence. It becomes clear that the early Panth incorporated in itself a broad spectrum of castes. Of those who are identified in caste terms in absolute majority were Khatris, others such as Jats, there being in minority. That the Jats had joined Sikh religion can be testified by the author of *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, a contemporary of the sixth Guru and an interested observer of his following.

The number of Jat converts to Sikhism went on increasing during Guru Har Rai, Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh. A larger portion of the Jats inhabiting the Majha region and Malwa region came within the embrace of Sikhism. Under Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh, the people of the lower strata, washermen, labourer, scavengers and Ramdasias also entered into the Sikh fold. Bhai Nanu who picked up the revered severed head of the ninth Guru was a washerman and Bhai Jaita who took the head to Anandpur Sahib belonged to the class of scavengers. Many Brahmin families in Punjab but mostly in Kashmir also became Sikhs, but the number of Brahmins was very lean.

Many Mohammedans were also converted to Sikhism. Guru Nanak left a host of converts in Mesopotamia, Persia and other countries which he visited. The oldest Janam Sakhi (1588) mentions many places like the Kire of Pathans, where a large number of Mohammedans became Sikhs. From the list of Sikhs given by Bhai Gurdas (1629) in the eleventh Var, we find among others such names as Mardana the rebeck-player who accompanied Guru Nanak in his journeys; Daulat Khan Pathan who became a Sikh saint; Gujar a blacksmith, who was a Sikh of Guru Angad and preached Sikhism in his village, Hamza; and Mian Jamal who remained constantly in presence of Guru Hargobind. From history we gather many names of Mohammedans, who became admirers of Sikhism like Rai Bular the Mohammedan Chief of Talwandi, who appreciated Guru Nanak better than his own parents did; Allah Yar and Hussain Shah who profitted spiritually from Guru Amar Das may be considered almost as Sikhs; Mian Mir who was so intimately connected with the work of Guru Arjan that the latter asked him to lay the foundation-stone of Golden Temple; Sayyed Budhu Shah of Sadhaura, Kale Khan and Sayyed Beg who fought for Guru Gobind Singh. There were others who actually became Sikhs; Sajjan who had been a robber, became a Sikh of Guru Nanak and preached his religion; a Nawab's son who was converted by Bhai Paro of Dalla in the Jullundur Doab; Wazir Khan who was an assistant Minister of Akbar and who secretly followed the teachings of Guru Arjan; Budhan Shah, the 'simlon' of Sikh history, who was devoted to the memory of Guru Nanak and ultimately died a Sikh in the time of Guru Hargobind; Saif-ud-Din of Saifabad in Patiala who was converted by Guru Tegh Bahadur just before the latter's arrest; Sayyed Shah converted by Bhai Nand Lal; and Faqir called Brahmi or Ibrahim who was the first Mohammedan who offered himself to Guru Gobind Singh to be baptised. The Guru, when baptising this Mohammedan, issued orders that if any Muslim, whether of high or low position, in good faith desired to join the Khalsa, it is proper that he should be baptised and received in our community. These are only a few names out of many who embraced Sikhism.

The Gurus also converted many outcasts and men of lowest castes, such as Ramdasias or Shoe-makers. Guru Gobind Singh opened the door of 'Pahul' or equal baptism to all—even to the sweepers who for their staunch faith came to be called Mazhabis or faithful. The Mazhabis are sometimes called Rangretta, a term



which probably became in vogue due to the fact that some of them owed their origin to Mohammedans of the Rangarh clan. Because of their gallantry in rescuing the mutilated body of Guru Tegh Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh called them 'Rangretta, Guru Ka Beta'—the Rangretta is the Guru's own son. So upto Guru Gobind Singh, the Sikh community came to be composed of Khatries, Brahmins, Jats, Washermen, Barbers, Confectioners, Artisans and outcastes such as sweepers and shoe-makers popularly known as Ramdasias and scavengers. The exact proportion of each of the aforesaid segment of people is not known, yet it appears that Jats and Khatries formed the bulk of the Sikh people. In A.D. 1699, on the occasion of the creation of Khalsa, it was proclaimed that the Khalsa would not only be a society of people practising NAM and social equality and purporting to build economic edifice on the basis of dignity of labour but also serve a vanguard of the people to persuade the people to emulate them. This proclamation sounded strange to all those, particularly Khatries and Brahmins who were so much saturated with caste-spirit that they could not think of a social system exagamous to it. They, being privileged in the social structure based on Varnashram theory, were not in a mood to accept the system denying them any special privilege and equating them with all including those who in caste-ridden society were considered as low or outcaste. Accordingly, most of Khatries and Brahmins ceased to be the Sikhs. "Khatries and Brahmins, by and large remained aloof. Some of them professed that they had faith in the religion of Guru Nanak and other Gurus; but many out of them refused to renounce the teachings of the Vedas and Shastras. They had been quite willing to pay lip service to the ideal of a casteless society, but they loathed to soil their lips with nectar from the same bowl and to commit themselves to the task of the new order with the result that many of them reverted to Brahmanism. Some remained just Sikh better known as Sehajdhari, and very few of them entered the order of the Khalsa."<sup>1</sup> This thing had important social repercussion. Koer Singh in his book *Gurbilas Padshahi Dasvin* observes, "The Khalsa became cynosure of the hitherto neglected classes in social organisation of the Hindus. The people belonging to scavenger class rejoiced in this august body. The Guru also felt proud of them and called them as his own sons (Rangretta—Guru Ka Beta).

1. S.S. Gandhi, *History of the Sikh Gurus*, p. 436.

Jats in particular were conscious of the rationale and objectives of the movement in favour of the people who were regarded low in the social scale of the Hindus, and also of the Muslims."

Thus the Sikh society in the eighteenth century underwent a change in the proportional strength of its different components. Jats became predominant as they received baptism en bloc. Many of the Khatries hesitated, presumably they did not want to be equated with Jats and other members of the Khalsa Brotherhood—much less to commit themselves to the spread of the ideal of social equality among the people at large and slid back to their ancestral religion. Some of them felt contented to be called as Nanak Panthi, the followers of the Guru, or Sehajdhari the slow adopter. Among the Nanak Panthi Sikhs, Khatries were more prominent than Jats. The difference is presumably to be explained in part at least by the levelling implications of the Khalsa initiation rite, a feature which would offer a serious deterrent to Brahmins as well as Khatries. The Brahmin Sikh was hereafter a rare phenomenon, Khatries would at least retain a loyalty on the basis of their connection with the Gurus. Together with a small number of other non-Khalsa Sikhs, these unbaptised Khatries provide a direct link between the early pre-Khalsa Nanak Panthi and the so-called Sehajdhari Sikhs of the twentieth century.

In spite of the indifference which the Brahmins and Khatries developed vis-a-vis the Khalsa, the total numerical strength of the Khalsa went on increasing. During Banda Bahadur a large number of people accepted Sikhism as their faith. Most of Saini population inhabiting Hoshiarpur and Ropar districts embraced Sikhism during Banda Bahadur, apart from the conversion of the peasantry of the Doaba and Riarki to Sikhism. The so-called low-caste people also embraced Sikhism on a large scale. Copious references regarding this fact are available in the contemporary records such as 'Bahadur Nama' and Irvine's 'Later Mughals'. Bahadur Shah suspected that most of the Hindus were in sympathy with the rebellion and had secretly accepted conversion to the Sikh faith. The following quote from the 'Later Mughals' also amply supports our thesis :

"A low scavenger or leather dresser, the lowest of the low in Indian estimation, had only to leave home and join the Guru (referring to Banda), when in a short time, he would return to his birth-place as its ruler with his order of appointment in his hand. As soon as he set foot within the boundaries, the wealthy went out to greet him and escort him home. Arrived there, they

stood before him with joined palms awaiting his orders—not a soul dared disobey an order and men who had often risked themselves in battlefields became so cowed down that they were afraid even to remonstrate, Hindus who had not joined the sect, were not exempt from these."

As the 18th century advanced, the conversion from Muslim community stopped, understandably because the Muslim ruling class was successful in painting at least among their co-religionists that Sikhism was nothing more than a movement to finish Islam in India. The Sikh people too, on their part, failed to bring to the notice of the Muslims in general the socio-economic content as well as the humanistic vision of their struggle. Some of them, as for instance, the authors of the codes of conduct known as *Rahat Namas* even openly professed that the Muslims should not be trusted and no dignified rapport should be forged between the Sikhs and the Muslims. This being so, the conversions to Sikhism were confined mainly to the Hindu masses. Only a few persons from amongst the Muslims embraced Sikh religion. This trend had far-reaching effects. The Hindu masses brought to the contemplation of the new moral forces released by Sikhism, a mode and imagination saturated with spiritual convictions of the old era.

Thus in the last few decades of the 18th century, the Jats formed the preponderant majority of the Sikhs. The next largest group constituting the Sikh society was the artisans—Tarkhans, Lohars, Chhimbas and Chuhras. Ranghrettas (scavengers) came next to Rangarhs in numerical strength closely followed by Khatries and Aroras, Kambohs, Lohars, Jhiwars and the Rajputs came last of all with a very small numerical strength. There were only a sprinkling of Brahmins in the Sikh community. This composition of Sikh society was also exemplified in the census of 1881.

An analysis of the composition of the Sikh Society shows that most of the people who embraced Sikhism were those who were not given dignified status in the social organisation of the Hindus and were not allowed to grow unhampered and unhindered. The second conclusion which emerges is that most of the people belonged to the rural community; only a small slice of the urban people accepted Sikhism. The reasons are not far to seek. The urban areas were inhabited mostly by the ruling classes or those who in one way or the other, depended upon them in respect of their business or livelihood or were in hand and glove with

them. This being so, they were not in a mood to appreciate, much less to adopt Sikhism; only a few among them, mainly the artisans the so-called low-caste people and the poor embraced Sikhism and they did so because they felt that the new religion would ensure their progressive growth and not become hindrance on their way to their elevation. The rural people embraced Sikhism on a large scale. The reasons are very clear in this case also. Firstly, the Sikh Gurus could find time to preach among them and bring about new awareness among them so that they might be able to have a better time if they structured society as postulated by them. Secondly, the Mughal rule was not deep in its impact on the rural people because of their vast number and the vast area inhabited by them. Thirdly, the rural people being mostly agriculturists were much tired of the revenue officials whose demands were often extortionate—certainly beyond their capacity to pay. Besides this, they were considered as innocent sheep to be fleeced and no intention was manifest on the part of the government to take care of their diet and health. They had no love lost for the Mughal Government and its officials including the priestly class of the Muslims that lent religious authority to the extortionate measures of the Government officials. Accordingly, they developed aversion to them and their way of living—even their religion. This point has been brought to light in the beautiful manner by Misikin (p. 84) and Syar (iii 50-1). Misikin says, "The peasantry of the Punjab had grown restless and discontented under heavy charges and by the ill-treatment of the revenue officials of the Mughalia troops. Finding no other way of escape from this predicament, they preferred the adoption of Sikhism in order to get rid of their sad plight and to enjoy the privileges of power, plunder and punishing their enemies. Consequently, wherever the villagers underwent oppression they grew their hair, shouted 'Akal', 'Akal', took the 'Pahul' and converted themselves to the Sikh religion....."

Judged from the caste angle with the exception of Khatries, Aroras and Brahmins, all others who joined the Sikh society belonged to the castes which were accorded low status in the social organisation of Hindus. Since Sikhism promised dignified status, complete social equality and spiritual elevation to all irrespective of caste, birth and 'arm', the aforesaid people embraced Sikhism without any hesitation and reservation. The truth of the fact is vouchsafed by Archer in the following words :

"The Sikhs had come in the first instance from the humbler

levels of society; but their level became in turn the upper level of the new society into which the low caste people including sweepers and miscellaneous tribesmen came. Some low-caste individuals had even come to Sikhism by way of prior conversion to Islam."

Closely connected with the composition of the Sikh society in the 18th century is the question: What was the correct caste position in the Sikh society?

The fact that the Gurus were vigorous and practical denouncers of caste can be easily verified by their utterances and their examples. Guru Nanak declared his attitude in a famous and oft-repeated couplet:

Phakar Jati Phakar Nau  
 Sabhana Jia ika Chhau. (*Adi Granth*, p. 83)  
 (Worthless is caste and worthless an exalted name. For  
 all mankind, there is but one single refuge.)

Nanak's successors repeat this same message:

"When you die, you do not carry your caste with you. It  
 is your deeds (and not your caste) which will determine  
 your fate."

(*Asa 3, Adi Granth*, p. 363)

These are words of Guru Amar Das and he, it seems, was the Guru responsible for borrowing from the Sufis the practice of compulsory commonsality.<sup>1</sup> To this day every Sikh Gurdwara must have attached to it a dining room (the Langar) in which meals are served to any who may care to accept them. This strikes at the very root of an important aspect of caste and there can be no doubt that the aforesaid practice was instituted for this very reason. Guru Ram Das also carried forward the same message:

There are four castes and four traditional stages in the holy  
 life,

But he who meditates on God, he it is who is Supreme.<sup>2</sup>

The fifth Guru, Arjan Dev, repeated it yet again and significantly included in the scripture which he prepared, the works of two earlier poets, Kabir, a low caste weaver (julaha), and Ravidas, an outcaste leather-worker (chamar) insisting that the devotional way of salvation was open to them as to anyone else. Guru Arjan indicated his agreement by retaining their hymns in

1. W.H. Mcleod, *Guru Nanak & Sikh Religion*, Oxford, 1968, p. 210.

2. Gond 4, *Adi Granth*, p. 861.



the Granth Sahib, the sacred scripture of the Sikhs. He also included works attributed to Namdev, a low-caste calico printer (chhimba). By doing so, Guru Arjan Dev pronounced that caste was irrelevant to the Sikh Panth.

Finally, there was the example set by Guru Gobind Singh at the institution of the Khalsa Brotherhood in 1699, specifically in the ceremony of the initiation which he is said to have introduced on that occasion. The climax of this ceremony was a form of baptism which required all candidates to drink from a common bowl, striking once again at the notion of ritual purity. In Sikh tradition, the anti-caste quality of the Khalsa initiation is further strengthened by the belief that the first five to accept baptism included representatives ranging from high-caste Khatri to middle-caste Jat to low-caste barber and washerman.

From the above, it is clear that the Gurus rejected caste as the basis of the society which they proposed to evolve. It is gratifying to note that the impact of the Gurus' injunctions against caste was much encouraging. The true devotees of the Sikh Gurus ceased to hold respect for caste and caste considerations. Thinking on caste-line was considered anathema in Sikh Sangats and in the institution of Langar. In the order of the Khalsa ushered in on the Baisakhi of 1699, the rejection of caste and caste considerations was considered to be the first essential pre-requisite of initiation into the Khalsa Brotherhood. No doubt, the stragglers and sticklers to old order were there, as for instance many Khatries who abjured Sikh faith on the eve of the creation of the Khalsa, yet they were never esteemed as ideal members of the Sikh society; nor did they claim to be so. The dominant tendency of the Sikh society has always been to establish casteless society.

Prof. W.H. Mcleod in his book *Evolution of the Sikh Community* has very cleverly insinuated that the most prominent violators of the anti-caste commandments are the Gurus themselves. Nothing rouses a Sikh to greater fury than a censure (direct or implied) of the Gurus and it is presumably for this reason that the suggestion has rarely found its way into print. It is, however, uttered often enough in conversation and ought therefore to be brought into the open for examination.

"The ten Gurus were all Khatries by caste. In other words, they all belonged to a mercantile class claiming (as its name indicates) the elevated rank of Kshatriya; and commanding a high status rating in Punjabi society. This is widely regarded as a great



pity, even within Sikh society where the numerically preponderant Jat community bewail the fact that there was never a single Jat Guru. It is not, however, the point and substance of the impertinent suggestion. The suggestion concerns the marriage practices observed by the Gurus. All, without exception, arranged marriages for their children in strict accordance with traditional caste prescription. There is no instance of a Guru having contracted on behalf of his children marriages with boys or girls from lower castes (nor indeed for a higher rank although in view of the elevated Khatri status that is less significant). All the Gurus themselves Khatries, married Khatri wives and this, declare their critics, is the true measure of their sincerity. How can one respect a commandment when its promulgators ignore it."

Prof. Mcleod's approach is at once unhistorical and mischievous. He does not give any contemporary or semi-contemporary evidence bringing out that the Jats objected to the caste line of the Gurus. In fact, the Guruship was awarded to the person who deserved it and not to the one who belonged to a particular caste. It was just coincidence that the persons who were given Guruship belonged to Kashtriyas. But did they ever take pride in their caste? Certainly not. As a matter of fact, they condemned caste as also caste considerations in strongest possible terms (C.F. above). To connect the issue of Guruship with the numerical strength of Jats is another historical oddity cleverly pleaded by the learned but clever Mcleod. When the Guruship was to be passed on to the best person, numerical strength could not be the determinant. And how was the learned professor sure that the Jats in the Guru period considered everything in terms of Jats as a caste? Whatever little evidence has come to our notice, they were not Jat conscious, rather Sikhism-conscious or Guru-conscious. Many important Jats such as Bhai Budha, Ajita Randhawa and so many others were proud of being Sikhs of the Gurus, instead of being Jats, and they were likewise held in very high esteem by the Gurus. In the face of all this, it is preposterous to think that the Gurus acted in violent flagration of the castelessness which they preached.

Another plank on which the learned professor builds his thesis is the issue of their children's marriages. The Gurus married themselves and their children in the families which had staunch faith in Sikh religion; they did not think in terms of caste. Will the learned scholar produce any evidence to support that the

Gurus insisted on marrying themselves and their children with the persons of their caste? The difficulty with Mcleod is that he stretches the simple facts so as to suit his thesis. The good historiography is to allow the facts to speak for themselves, without subjecting them to the pressure of arguments as well as imagination.

Well, there is truth that caste considerations could not be completely wiped off. The emphatic pronouncement of Guru Gobind Singh on the eve of the inauguration of the institution of Khalsa that castes would be considered anti-Khalsa implies, at least roughly, that caste considerations could not be effaced. But surely these did not form a factor, strong enough to influence the Sikh society and Sikh polity. It was because of this that during the period of Banda many persons belonging to low classes entered into the fold of Banda. Ramdasias, Mazhabis and many others entered the Sikh society and were treated as the honourable members of the Khalsa Brotherhood. As the Sikhs were treated as a group by the state for matters of their persecution and extirpation, they naturally thought in terms of the members of the same genre. This single factor, of course, in conjunction with the factor of Guru's anti-caste injunction, gave strong blows to the caste and caste-spirit among the Sikh people. During the period from the death of Guru Gobind Singh upto last few decades of the 18th century, there is not even a single example of caste group asserting itself against any other caste group constituting Sikh society. The utterances and policies of the Sikh leadership in the aforesaid period all point to the irrefutable conclusion that everything was decided and done by the Panth and for the Panth. The contribution of the Rangrettas or so-called low-caste people is as great as that of Jats or Khatries or anyone else. If Kapur Singh and Jassa Singh were given the honour of becoming the leaders of the Sikhs, it was because they were true Khalsa committed to the Khalsa ideals. Had the caste-spirit existed in some substantial measure, it must have been exploited by the Mohammedan Government as well as by Ahmad Shah Abdali and his clever Wazir Shah Wali Khan.

Then certain factors operated in such a way that caste-spirit began to manifest itself. The growing antipathy of the Muslims against the Sikhs began to react on the work of the Sikh mission among the Muslims until with the intense religious persecution started by the later Mughals against the Hindus as well as the Sikhs,

the conversions to Sikhism were almost solitarily confined to the Hindu masses, who required sustained therapy of the Sikh ideology to shed off the lingering effects of their old religion. But the things did not move smoothly. The veteran Sikhs disciplined by Guru Gobind Singh himself had been martyred and their descendants forced to remain in exile with the result that the congregation began to drift back to the old customs and beliefs. Those who came from low castes began to be distinguished from those who came from the so-called high castes. The Sikhs could keep caste-system away only from the Misls whose membership was open to all and whose patronage was also shared equally by all. These Misls were in miniature Sangats-in-arms. But with the lapse of time particularly after 1765 when the Punjab was almost under the control of the Sikhs, the Misls began to assume the role of sub-States. The Sardars at the head of different Misls began to act as sovereigns. Now came before them the question of selection or appointment of their councillors and officials. They were also stalked with the ambition of becoming all-powerful and absolutely independent of one another. This being the state of their minds, there arose mutual squabbles among them. As a consequence, every Sardar began to resort to even unfair means to have his end. Accordingly, they appealed to the regional or tribal sentiments. The Sikh mission having gone weak and slack, could not arrest this trend with the result that caste considerations received strength. Apart from it the Misl social structure also helped the growth of this process. Misl in its origin consisted of the people either belonging to a village or a group of villages. These people often belonged to same tribe or same caste group or the persons attached with them. Later on, Misl could widen the sphere of attachment by incorporating people of adjoining area. They were mostly ruralities and as such majority of Misl population consisted of Jats—the caste preponderant in rural areas. In the initial stages particularly upto 1765, the Sikhs consciousness formed the dominant impulse of these people. But when the Sardars began to look more towards their selfish gains, the caste consideration among the Jats also began to emerge on the scene side by side with the Sikh spirit. Since majority of the Misl Sardars and their followers happened to be Jats, the power and prestige which the Misls acquired, were shared by them with the result that they began to take pride in their caste.

The emergence of caste-sense among the Sikhs, however, did

not follow the traditional four layered caste-system. It established new hierarchy with Jats, at the top to be followed next in grade by Khatris, Aroras and Ramgarhias. Ramdasias and Mazhabis occupied the lowest position. The mind of the Sikhs instead of making the degree of Sikhism as the basis for social status began to work along the age-long grooves of caste-system. According to Ethne K. Marengo, the emergence of caste and the caste considerations were clearly observed by the British observers of late eighteenth century. James Browne who wrote history of the Origin and progress of the Sikhs in 1783 states that the Panth consisted mostly of the Jauts (jat) tribe. Writing in 1803 William Franklin also perceived though dimly that caste-spirit had grown. The following excerpt from Franklin book *Military Memoirs of Mr. George Thomas* is an eloquent testimony to the veracity of the aforesaid thesis :

"The Sieks allow foreigners of every description to join their standard, to sit in their company and to share their beards, but excepting in the instance of the Jauts, they will not consent to inter-marriages, nor will they eat or drink from the hands of an alien except he be a Brahmin and for this caste they always profess the highest veneration."

Originally the converts to Sikhism changed their religion in order to escape the disabilities of their low-caste position in the Hindus hierarchy. Later there was considerable upward mobility of corporate caste type among the Sikhs.

To illustrate his point Ethne K. Marengo, the author of the *Transformation of Sikh Society* says, "The Ramgarhis sub-caste of the Tarkhan Sikh Carpenter caste achieved prominence as the Ramgarhia Misl. The Ahluwalia Misl is also interesting for the same reason as it was led by Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, a member of Kalal caste, or distillers of palm wine. The Kalals rank among the artisans castes of the Sikhs, but they along with the Tarkhan Sikhs or Ramgarhi Sikhs, achieved considerable mobility."

The emergence of castes and caste considerations among the Sikhs was certainly an act of black-sliding and contrary to the social structure as perceived by the Sikh Gurus and embodied in their teachings.

It is really a pity that the Sikh society of the eighteenth century could not realise the ideal of evolving itself into a coalesced single-class society.

## Chapter 26

# GURDWARA

Sangat has always been given a place of importance in Sikh religion. The word Sangat literally means an assembly. In Sikhism, it denotes an assembly of seekers of truth. According to Guru Nanak it is the society where the praises of the Supreme Lord alone are expounded.

It has always played a key role in the development of Sikhism. Its emergence was a socio-religious and metaphysical event. It provided opportunity to the people to gather, to receive, to ponder upon and to practise the Sikh ideals, and to take decisions in regard to various subjects touching a wide range. Such gatherings in course of time galvanised themselves into a distinct socio-religious group determined to educate themselves and all others who would so desire, as per instructions of the Guru. It was essentially because of this peculiar quality of Sangat that group-centered and group-oriented institutions such as 'Guru Ka Langar' came into being and operated as integral part of Sangat. Hence it is needless to remark that in Sikh conceptual vocabulary, Sangat and Pangat (files of men sitting together to partake of food together), are used in special sense.

With common conceptual goals, the individuals constituting Sangat began to shed off ego-centricity and all those thoughts and feelings which whipped up the individualistic tendencies and selfishness.

Guru Arjan says in Gauri Sukhmani Mahalla V, Ashtpadi 7, "in the company of saints one gets rid of mine-ness," and instead, "God, Name and Guru's Shabad, taste sweet to him". Guru Amar Das explains that "one in the company of saints sheds off all jealousies and feels that he is now enemy of none and no one in the world is stranger to him. He is friend of all the people."

As a matter of fact, Sangat socializes the ego-inhering a man, of course naturally by making him sit alongwith others and to concentrate upon Guru's 'Shabad' (sacred words) and to take

decision in the light of that with a mind at once clear and suffused with truthful feelings, thereby providing atmosphere and catalytics for the individual ego to transform itself into social conscience. Looked from this point of view, it can be surmised that this institution played a marked role in developing the macro-approach among the Sikhs.

This single factor of 'macro-approach' and concentration on Guru's Gospel by all irrespective of any distinction, gave a stunning blow to the invidious distinctions based on deep-rooted caste-feelings. In fact these distinctions are the anti-thesis of the very concept of Sangat, a congregation of the seekers of truth to develop the vision of looking upon everyone an equal and a friend. This being so Sangat initiates as well as champions the process of the fraternization of the people of all castes, all creeds and all walks of life on the basis of social equality and freedom to forge ahead and progress.

Sangat, besides conferring upon its members and all those coming under its influence, different advantages in social sense, was considered an academy wherein one could progress spiritually. Guru Ram Das says, "The true company is an academy of the true Guru where the teachings in the merits of God are imparted to the disciples." Bhai Nand Lal says, "My dear, if you are able to enjoy the company of the noble and the virtuous, you will acquire imperishable wealth thereby. Through the influence of the good company, I have seen particle of dust being exalted to the rank of a world-illuminating sun." Guru Gobind Singh's court poet Senapat writes in his book *Gursobha*, that when the seekers assemble in *Dharmshala*, *Parbrahm* is seen there. Guru Ram Das utters, "How and why and what way I can attain my own Lord I may be instructed in the merits and messages of Lord's blessings within the true congregation, God's presence is felt and with the association of saints His merits are known. It has been my great and good fortune to have company of the true congregation, I meet Guru and my Lord. In view of all this, it can be inferred that Sangat, besides socialising the ego of a man and fraternising different people, also operated as an instrument to spiritualise man and society.

Sangat, as it has been delineated in the preceding paragraphs, appears to be a socio-religious institution, but it assumed another character also which was that of metaphysical. It became a metaphysical event and reality. To Guru Arjan Dev, it was an ideal company in which the spirit of True Guru resides. It was



considered no less than the Guru. In Sikh hagiographical literature 'Sangat' was considered to be carrying more weight than the Guru. To express the idea in the words of Bhai Gurdas, if Guru's view scored 20 points, that of Sangat twenty-one points. When Guru Gobind Singh ordered that after him Guru Granth—Panth will be the Guru, then Sangat which is Panth on a small scale acquired yet greater status. This was the reason that people sought solace not only in social and physical sense, but also in metaphysical and spiritual senses. Urged by the later sense, the people supplicated it to be blessed with such things as birth of an issue or prosperous family life, or any other advantage and facility.

The place where Sangat congregated was known as Dharamsala to begin with. Since Sangat was held in great veneration, the Sikhs cherished that each home of the Sikhs should be converted into Sangat. As time passed, number of Sangats rose and they were dotted over a vast area including foreign countries. During the span of over 200 years from Guru Nanak to the death of Guru Gobind Singh, Sangats or Dharamsalas, were not considered as 'Guru Sangat' although they were considered as holding a unique position—equal or even higher than the Gurus' themselves, but they came to occupy the status of 'Guru Sangat' only after the proclamation of Guru Gobind Singh that henceforth Guruship shall not vest in human form but in the Panth (expanded form of Sangat) and in *Adi Granth*. Since Sangat was a part of the same whole i.e. Panth, it began to operate with confidence and with sacerdotal authority naturally sticking to the exalted office of the Guru.

Now the place where Sangat congregated and *Adi Granth* was installed began to be called Gurdwara, the abode of the Guru. At Gurdwara, the Sangat, apart from reciting Gurbani and the compositions of Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Nand Lal, and pondering over their heritage, could discuss any matter, concerning them and the world around in a spirit of truth and usefulness. It therefore, presented at once the focal point of Sikh activities—political, social and spiritual as also ideal pattern of conduct to be followed by the Sikhs both individually and collectively. The frequency with which the Dharamsala is mentioned in *Janam Sakhis* and hagiographical literature also indicates that Gurdwara occupied a central position in the life of the community.

Right from the times of Guru Nanak, Gurdwaras had been raised with devotion and enthusiasm by the Sikhs. Most of them were associated with one or another of the galaxy of the ten Gurus.

The Guru period lasted for over 200 years and during this span a large number of sacred centres grew up bearing associations with the Gurus and representing places of worship for the Sikh community. Some of the Gurdwaras were raised to commemorate the sacred memory of the Sikh heroes who suffered martyrdom in the course of history.

Besides this, there were many other Gurdwaras which the local Sangats raised, though former category of Gurdwaras was held in special reverence, yet the function of the different Gurdwaras were the same. In the Sikh psyche the Gurdwaras were identified with notional identity. According to a modern writer's observation, "The freedom of their (Sikhs') temples has been the measure of their temples, is also the measure of their religious purity. They have their religion in their temples which are not only places of worship but training grounds of social science, public administration and other kinds of practical religion as well."

Late professor Teja Singh's views regarding Gurdwaras' role in the build-up of the Sikh life and Sikh style are pertinent. He gave his remarks while evaluating 'Prayer' of the Sikhs. He says, "The Sikh prayer, in which the most stirring events of the Sikh History are recounted, grows most eloquent when reference is made to the brave heroes who suffered martyrdom for the sake of temples. Much of the daily religious discourse turns on the labours of the devout Sikhs, like Bhai Buddha, Bhai Bhagtu, Bhai Bahlo, Bhai Kalyana and thousands of others in connection with the excavation of sacred tanks or the collection of material for the repairing of temples or it expatiates on the sufferings by the Sikhs, like Bhai Mehtab Singh and Baba Deep Singh, in their attempts to rescue their temples from the rulers or the immoral priests. Sometimes it is a Massa Ranghar and sometimes a Sarbrah, but the story is always the same. To tell the truth, the freedom of their temples has always been the measure of the Sikh freedom and prosperity."

The building aspect of Gurdwara also reflected and embodied the spirit of Sikhism. Gurdwara often consisted of a hall with four doors, a kitchen and a shoe-place with a wash basin nearby. Besides, there was in the hall, a special place reserved for the holy Granth Sahib—high post with unfurled yellow or dark blue flag surmounted with a double-edged sword. The four doors of the hall were symbolic of the free and unrestricted access of anybody and everybody to the Gurdwara. No distinction of caste,

creed or colour, it is God's place meant for the use of God's men. Women enjoyed the same privileges as men. There was to be no distinction between rich and poor and all people are to be seated alike with affection and regard. The Gurdwara was the meeting place of equals in every respect. Another significance of four doors of the hall is that God is not to be found in a particular direction. Whereas big hall provided accommodation to a large number of people seeking together at Gurdwara, it also epitomised the way of conducting religious and social duties which was congregational or collective in its nature and content.

The flag post of Gurdwara was always embossed at the top by a double-edged sword. It could be seen from a distance. Both the edges of Khanda signify a two-fold duty of every member of the Sangat. It beckoned him to come under it in the hour of need and it also beckoned others to go out to help the needy. As a symbol of Shakti, it emboldened the Khalsa to be Shaktiman (strong) and help Shakti-heen (the weak). The *Khanda* symbolised God's power. Those who came under it could not remain powerless. A glance through the history of the Sikhs reveals that after offering an Ardas in a Gurdwara, the Khalsa felt so much inspired that they won battles even where all odds were against them. More than once a desperate attempt was made to deprive the Khalsa of their Gurdwaras so that they could become weak and defeated, and exactly in the same frequency and many a time with more intensity, the Sikhs struggled to get back their Gurdwaras.

In view of what we have detailed in preceding paragraphs regarding the unique part which Gurdwara had been playing in the development of Sikhism, the Sikhs felt emotionally attached to Gurdwaras, and whenever they found time and resources, they would at once repair, renovate or build new ones.

The Harimandir was destroyed by the Afghans thrice; but no sooner did Sikhs find opportunity, they rebuilt it. After the conquest of Sirhind (January 14, 1764), the Khalsa spread a sheet of cloth at the ruins of the temple and collected offerings amounting to nine lakhs of rupees. The amount was deposited with famous bankers of Amritsar such as Mohan Lal Lamba, Shyam Bhabra and Kalyan Pasi. Bhai Des Raj a Khatri of village Sur Singh, district Amritsar known for honesty and truthfulness was made in-charge of the finances of the project and was entrusted with the job of reconstructing the building of the temple and the tank

should be completed as per plan. Bhai Des Raj was granted a seal 'Guru di Mohar' as a 'Hukamnama' from their Guru. The building work was started under the supervision of Des Raj. This time, the foundation of the new construction and the tank was laid by Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia on Baisakh 11, Samvat 1821 B.K. (A.D. 1764). With the joint effort of the Khalsa, the construction of Amrit Sarovar, the Harimandir, the bridge and Darshani Darwaza was completed in A.D. 1776. The construction of parkarma and religious places around the tank was completed by A.D. 1786. In the same way the amount was collected and the building of Anandgarh was constructed anew.

The management of the Gurdwara upto the time of the tenth Guru was done by the Sikh congregation. The central point involved in the management was to keep continuous rapport with the Gurus. The Sikh Gurus well aware of the problem strove hard to keep rapport with them through various means such as appointing their deputies known as Masands, sending Meoras of special messengers to them and despatching 'Hukamnamas'—sacred fiats. The Masands acquired great importance in the time of the fifth and sixth Gurus. In the beginning these Masands were men of noble character and there was no problem of mis-management of the local Gurdwaras. But as time went on, they acquired more and more following and consequently became more and more wealthy. This introduced an element of corruption in the management of local Gurdwaras. Guru Hargobind was the first to sense the danger and he introduced some reform to show the Masands their proper place. But after him, there was again a spurt in the undesirable activities of the Masands—so much so that the ninth Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur, was put to considerable inconvenience by these Masands. Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and the last Guru of the Sikhs clearly saw through their nefarious activities and abolished the very institution of Masands thereby releasing the Sangats from the iron grip of the Masands and bringing them into direct relationship with the Guru himself. Now the management passed on to the Sangat who, for day-to-day administration of Gurdwara selected out of them a number of persons, often unanimously and five in number known as Panj Pyaras.

After the death of Guru Gobind Singh, the Sikhs had to pass through a period of titanic struggle with the Mughals and then with the Afghans. After Banda Bahadur most of the Khalsa had to take refuge in the hills of Shivalik or in local jungles or in the

deserts of Bikaner or at any other place where they could seek safe refuge. The military needs and the extension of the Khalsa influence shifted the Panth's primary interests away from Sangat towards the 'jatha' and later the Misl. Naturally during this period, they could not take direct interest in the management of their Gurdwaras. However the respect in their minds for the Gurdwaras remained as intense as it was ever.

The shift in interest does not mean that Gurdwara as an institution had lost its importance; on the other hand, it was the only institution which worked at the level of masses and provided cement to bring about some sort of compactness among them. The Gurdwaras developed during the period under study definite code of discipline. The services in Gurdwaras started at 4 o'clock in the morning. If, somehow, the Misls could have maintained permanent liaison with the Gurdwaras and taken lively interest in them the masses would have been Khalsised to a great extent, and to that extent the cause of the Khalsa must have been promoted. But alas, the Misls could not rise upto the occasion and failed to evolve suitable organisation to do the needful with the result that the Management of Gurdwaras passed into the hands of the Udasis and Nirmalas.

The Udasis were members of the Sikh monastic order which had been founded by Sri Chand, elder son of Guru Nanak. The order of the Nirmalas had been created by Guru Gobind Singh. As the Sikhs had been outlawed by the Government, the Udasis with their clean-shaven heads and Hindu appearance did them a yeomen's service by managing the Gurdwaras on their behalf. Of course these were difficult times and even the Udasis found it very difficult job. All the same, they managed the Gurdwaras fairly efficiently. Nirmalas also conducted themselves very creditably. Hindu priests simply managed the Gurdwaras but did nothing to promote Sikhism.

As the eighteenth century advanced, all the aforesaid three types of in-charges of Gurdwara began to act independent of Panth and Panthic ideology, and reverted to old Hindu religious practices. In fact the Hindu religious practices and its framework so suited their vested interests that they reverted to them; they began to function the Gurdwara as if it were a Hindu temple. They did not encourage—rather discouraged the participation of Sangat in the affairs of Gurdwaras as this thing went contrary to their own interests because they wished to be the sole master of the



influence and the offerings which Gurdwara wielded.

With establishment of the Sikh Misls in the Punjab this tendency was still more strengthened because Sikh Misldars granted lands to the Gurdwaras for their upkeep and hence placed at the hands of the priests a good source of income. The vast increase in the sources of income was also responsible for the introduction of element of corruption in the Gurdwara management and for the degradation of the personal character of the priests. This thing also led them not to associate Sangat with Gurdwara management because they apprehended criticism from the people constituting Sangat. This was one of the major causes that Sangat did not play any significant role in the later half of the eighteenth century. Thus the process of Sangatization of the people came to a halt at the level of the people.

No doubt, the Guru Granth Sahib was recited in Gurdwaras and a definite code of its functioning was evolved; but all this began to be done in a Hindu way. Guru Granth Sahib began to be made out as the fifth Veda or something to be worshipped as an idol, this, inspite of the dictum that the sacred word enshrined in Adi Granth, was to be considered as 'living Guru'. The ten Gurus began to be presented as the incarnations of Vishnu. Money offerings were encouraged along with the repeated emphasis on the performance of various ceremonies such as placing of a coconut and an earthen pitcher filled with water and robed in a red piece of cloth during 'Akhand Path'.<sup>1</sup> Paths as for instance, Sampat Path and Akhand Path were propagated to be the sure way to attain beatitude. The priests also resorted to spreading various types of superstitions such as sale of Talisman as life-saving gadgets etc. The landed property of Gurdwaras donated by the devotees began to be treated as personal acquisition. The income through offerings was also treated likewise. Sangat was relegated to the background both in spiritual and temporal matters. In view of this, it can be surmised that the process of Sangatization (Khalsisation) of the whole Sikh people gave place to Sanatantization. These priests commonly known as Mahants made no pretence of observing Khalsa discipline. It was on account of this that authors of Ludhiana District Gazetteer, page 73 recorded, "Hindus and Sikhs except Kukas are greatly ruled by Brahmins. Everyone has a prohit or priest for everyday life, and

1. Continuous reading of the whole Guru Granth Sahib within forty-eight hours.



a Panda or Superior Priest who must be a learned man, read in the scriptures for marriage and other celebrations. Whatever observances a Brahmin enjoins must be preformed and there is often a good deal of tyranny, hard penance, being ordered by trifling faults." The census report 1881, Vol 1, p. 112 also bears evidence to the same effect, "nearly all the Sikh villagers reverence and make use of the Brahmins almost as freely as do their Hindu neighbours."

Even the historical shrines with singular exception of Harimandir and Kesh Garh began to be run on Hindu lines with dire consequences for the Sikh religion. In some of the Gurdwaras Udasis and Nirmalas acted as priests but even their conduct was far from satisfactory. Udasis with a few exceptions, ran the Gurdwaras as if they were monasteries. During the last few decades of the eighteenth century, they worked as a sect, more interested in sectarian interests than those of the Khalsa, and they seemed to have forgotten the role assigned to them by Baba Sri Chand. Nirmalas too did not come upto the expected standard. They being honoured scholars of Sikhism were expected to bring before the people the uniqueness and distinctness of Sikh religion; but as it happened, instead they gave Vedantic interpretation of Sikhism with the effect that impression gained strength that Sikhism had no distinct philosophy or stance. No doubt the Gurdwaras in their hands provided arrangement for imparting knowledge of Gurmukhi alphabet and of Sikh scriptures and to this extent benefitted the Sikhs; but hereto, the advantage was limited because the curriculum laid more emphasis on learning of Sanskrit and the books of Hindu philosophy.

In view of all this, Gurdwaras ceased to serve a radiating centre of Sikh culture—much less, the school to educate the masses, although in terms of religious piety, the Gurdwara still provided strong bond of Panthic unity. The effects were not very happy. The Sikh masses were in a way delinked from their cultural sources and as a result they fell victim to the irrelevant doctrines and practices. Similarly, the Sikh ruling class had been thoroughly brain-washed upto the end of the 18th century (exceptions were undoubtedly there); they took interest in the chanting of mantras, went on pilgrimage to Hardwar and Benaras and forced their widows to perform Sati. Such was also the state of affairs during the reign of the superstitious Brahmin-ridden Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780-1839).

## Chapter 27

# SIKH RELIGIOUS ORDERS

### Nirmal Panth

The order had been brought into being by Guru Gobind Singh himself—his purpose being that it will give exclusive attention to the propagation of Sikhism. The order did commendable work. Who thronged the length and breadth of India to convey the message of the Guru. In the life-time of Guru Gobind Singh, by his orders Bhai Punjab Singh Nirmala came to the Punjab, settled down at Khadur and spread Sikhism in the area. He so identified himself with the cause of the people that they adored him and considered it their good luck to enter into the Sikh fold. His grand pupil Rocha Singh Nirmala was responsible for conversion, on a large scale, in the predominant Muslim areas of Kashmir and Pothohar, Pandit Man Singh, Lakha Singh, Sabha Singh, Chet Singh, Nihal Singh, Mehtab Singh, only to mention a few among many, spared no pains to spread Sikhism and to work for it in different parts of the country. Some differences arose between Vinod Singh (in the seventh generation of Guru Angad Dev) and Banda Singh Bahadur. Dharam Singh Nirmala advised him to leave Banda Singh Bahadur in the larger interests of the community. It was again Dharam Singh who brought Vinod Singh in touch with Baba Deep Singh and Baba Ala Singh (the founder of the Patiala State). Baba Ala Singh took Khande-ki-Pahul in which Baba Dharam Singh, Baba Vinod Singh and Baba Deep Singh acted as Piyaras. Baba Ala Singh so much appreciated the sagacity of Baba Dharam Singh that he gave land where ceremony was held by Baba Gurmukh Singh Nirmala, a pupil of Baba Dharam Singh Nirmala. Nihal Singh Nirmala rendered 'Japji' of Guru Nanak into Sanskrit. Other Nirmalas also wrote books touching varied topics pertaining to Sikhism. Sohan wrote *Gurbilas Padshahi Chbevin*, while Bhai Koer Singh wrote *Gurbilas Padshahi Dasvin*.

All along, the Nirmalas had been fond of Sanskrit and were obsessed with Vedantism. As the time rolled on and the number of the contemporary associates of the Guru or of his staunch followers like Bhai Mani Singh thinned, they began to evince more interest in flouting themselves as Vedantic Scholars than humble interpreters of Sikh philosophy. Besides this they began to superimpose the Vedantic point-of-view on the Sikh theological and philosophical structure.

In fact, they spent most of their time in studying six orthodox Hindu Schools of thought, Vedas, Mahabharata and Ramayana and in imparting these things to the people. No doubt, they recited Guru Granth Sahib and encouraged others to do the same; yet they did not do all this as an expression of bringing into limelight the distinctiveness of Sikhism, rather as a part of Vedantic tradition. This trend is reflected in most of their literary compositions which came into being particularly after the mid-eighteenth century. The veracity of the statement can be corroborated by examining the content of most of the Books produced in the aforesaid period. Gulab Singh Nirmala who was initiated into classical learning by Sant Man Singh, wrote *Bhavsimrat*—1777 A.D.; *Moksh Panth*—1778; *Adhyatam Ramayana*—1782; *Prabodh Chandra Natak* 1792; the general trend of all these books is Vedantic. This being the tendency of Nirmalas who were generally regarded as the venerable class of Sikh scholars, no book highlighting the distinctive philosophy of Sikhism could be produced. "The sect mostly turned out scholars of Sanskrit, who, like Sankaracharya, rooted themselves in Vedantism but unlike him flowered in Sikh Bhakti instead of Sanatan image worship and caste observance. Immersed in classical learning, they could not produce anything—unadulterated Sikhism in thought. Ever since their rise, they have formed the Sikh literary aristocratic caste devoting themselves to the popularisation of Vedanta and the philosophisation of Sikhism." (*History of Punjabi Literature* by Mohan Singh, 1932).

Another trend which became increasingly visible in the second half of the 18th century was that the Nirmalas began to found their establishments known in popular parlance as 'Deras'. Many such 'Deras' came into being—the reason being that Misdars after having acquired political power gave liberal grant to the Nirmalas to pursue their activities. In 1752, Baba Gandha Singh was given a grant of a big slice at village Khuddi. Sada Kaur, the wife of Gurbakhsh Singh donated three villages to Durgah Singh

who had succeeded to Durgah Singh. In A.D. 1764, Sardar Amar Singh gave a Patta of a few villages in the pargana of Sujampur to Lakha Singh who declined it. Sant Dhyan Singh of Shahbad willed his estate to Sant Karam Singh Nirmala (Chote). Sardar Ganda Singh of Bhangi Misl offered thirteen villages to Sant Jai Singh Nirmala, who instead of keeping it for himself passed it on to Udasi Dera of Santokh Das. Similarly Sardar Sadda Singh of Bahirwala gave a Patta of seven villages to Sant Bhagat Singh Nirmala in the year 1766. The offer was declined by the Sant but the Patta is still available at Bunga of Mana Singh wala, Amritsar. Sardar Jai Singh's daughter-in-law donated two villages in favour of the Nirmala Dera at Kankhal. The number of such Deras swelled to 34 upto the time of Ranjit Singh.

These establishments, after some time, created vested interests and each one began to vie with the other to prove its superiority—with the result that various Sampardayas (the number swelled to 34 upto Maharaja Ranjit Singh) came into being. Their approach to Sikhism apart from being Vedantic, became Dera-oriented as well. "Many of them took to wearing reddish ochre robes of the Sadhus—with whom, on that account, they were already confused. And they assumed other Hindu ways; preferred for example to read the Vedanta Sahas and other Hindu Books, practised Hindu rules of birth and death—but with no Hindu Mantras at their weddings and included Hindu shrines in their rounds of pilgrimage." They also started reposing faith in the Yogic practices in muttering of Nam and in various types of Samadhis—all these things which had been rejected by the Gurus as Pathway to Bliss. They, by doing so, went very near to the traditional Brahmanical class. They evolved a life-style which was quite different from the one recommended by Sikhism.

Besides this, they instead of being the custodian of the conscience of Sikh Chieftains, became their camp followers aspiring for patronage from them. The Sikh chieftains, very adroitly made use of the respectability which their name commanded among the people as the members of the order established by the tenth Guru. They after the foreign danger was over began to settle down as rulers or oligarchs. Since monarchical or oligarchical forms of Government of which they were the champions, clashed with the democratic spirit of Sikhism, they employed the help of the Nirmalas to provide moral base to their positions. Nirmalas, ungrudgingly, rendered much-needed help to them. As a matter

of fact the Nirmalas and the Sikh chieftains started operating in concert with each other. In this way, the Nirmalas lined up with the ruling Sikh Chieftains with the result that they became a class alienated from the people toeing or admiring the line of the Sikh Chieftains. This being so, the Nirmalas ceased to be the right type of missionaries of Sikhism and thus their services to the cause of Sikhism in the last few decades of the eighteenth century were not such which deserve our unqualified praise.

## Gyanis

Gyanis, however, played their part better judged from the point of view of the progress of Sikhism. The founder of the order (Sampardaya) of Gyanis was Bhai Mani Singh who learnt the art of exposition of Sikh scriptures from Guru Gobind Singh and who also became the chief priest of the main temple of the Sikhs at Amritsar. He wrote *Gyan Ratnavali*, compiled and arranged Dasam Granth, wrote commentary on 'Jap'. He and his associates or disciples asserted a lot to preach Khalsa ideals among the people. The most notable thing about their work is this that they could not be deflected from their path by the lure of gold or cheap fame. They, throughout, remained uncompromising in their stand and tried to preach unalloyed Sikhism. They did not recommend any ritual or short-cuts to the ultimate goal—and insisted on the observance of *Nam*, *Kirat* and *Wand Chhakna*. They were the strong protagonists of Gurbani as the means of transforming the individual as well as society. They had formed into groups and their chief headquarter was Damdama, Guru Ki Kashi. The Gyanis moved from one place to another. In doing so, they aimed at rendering two-fold service to the community. They gave insights into the Sikh principles to the general public and also the opportunities at the very doors of such persons who wanted to acquire the sampardayak-traditional knowledge, but could not remain away from home for a long time. The literature produced by this school was by no means small. Generally they have written translations and commentaries of the Adi Granth.

Besides, Bhai Mani Singh, Baba Deep Singh, Bhai Diwan Singh, Bhai Kaul Singh, Bhai Jassa Singh and Bhai Chanda Singh were other important Gyanis of the century.

## Udasis

The Udasis too did not play any commendable part in the

propagation of right type of Sikhism except for a short period roughly upto the mid-eighteenth century. In fact, a section of Udasis, inspite of the clear injunction of Sri Chand to work for the propagation of Sikhism during the time of Guru Hargobind, did swerve their line. Guru Gobind Singh resented their inaction and classed them with various quietists, for example, with the Sigguin or 'head plucked' Jains (who plucked out their hair lest it harbour insect which might perish) and with Kanpata or 'ear-cropped' yogis, an ascetic ear-marked type of world-renouncers.

The Udasis, in the eighteenth century, became virtually a monkish order of those who had given up their families. They wore their hair uncut, or cropped it or shaved it off, as they themselves might choose. They wore caps and reddish dhotis in the Hindu manner, dyed red of times in contrast with the blue of the Keshdhari Singh. They rejected the Granth of Gobind Singh and confined themselves to the Adi Granth. The psalms and prayers of Nanak in particular were preserved in their simple ritual of worship, but most of their rites reflected Hinduism, especially, and they did not object entirely to images. They used the tilak, wore the Janeu (sacred cord), and Mala (the rosary), like any Hindu, and they observed the Hindu rites of birth, marriage, death, cremation and the ceremony of Shradh. After the burning of a corpse, the ashes of it were deposited in a samadhi or tomb, after the custom of the Yogi and Sannyasi. Some of the stricter members of the order actually allowed themselves to be castrated to avoid impurity of conduct.<sup>1</sup>

They began to present ten Gurus as Avatars of Vishnu and Guru Granth Sahib as the fifth Veda.

---

1. John Archer, *The Sikhs*, p. 228.



## Chapter 28

# LAND TENURES, THEIR IMPACT ON THE STATE POLICIES<sup>1</sup>

In the eighteenth century Punjab, the Land Tenures in the Sikh dominions bear a variety which is at once indicative of the lingering effect of the past tenures as also of the Sikh-spirit which is essentially egalitarian. Zamindari as one of the forms of land tenures existed in the period under review. In the district of Lahore there were some properties called Zamindaris which belonged to one or more individuals and which remained undivided and were held in common. A small number of villages paid *baqqi-zamindari* or *baqq muqqadmi* to the Zamindars. By the term Zamindars—it was meant the persons holding certain rights over a piece of land. The possessors of Zamindari rights were not possessors of a visible article of property, like any other, but of a title to a constant share in the product of a piece of land. This share was called *Malkiana* and it amounted to 10% of the produce,  $\frac{1}{4}$ th of the produce often called *Chabrami* as the case may be. An eighteenth century glossary of revenue terms compiled by an official familiar with the practice of both Delhi and Bengal tells that *Malkiana* is a right of the Zamindar. It was allowed only when the state directly assessed and collected the land revenue by-passing the Zamindar. *Malkiana* was paid in cash; but it could also be given in the form of revenue free land at percentage of the total revenue paying land (something out of every hundred

1. This piece of information has been culled from the different Settlement Reports, *District Gazetteer*, *Famine Commission Enquiries Report* (1878-79) II, *The History of the Reign of Shah Alam*. Forster's *A Journey from Bengal to England through Northern Parts of India, Kashmir, Afghanistan and Persia and into Russia*, Baden Powell's *The Land System of British India*, 3 Vols, W.H. Moreland's *The Agrarian System of Moslem India*, Douie's *The Punjab, North-West Frontier Province and Kashmir*, and *Punjab Land Administration Manual*, and *Agrarian System of the Mughal India* by Irfan Habib.

Bighas). When Zamindar was himself revenue payer, he would not get the *malkiana*, but only *Nankar* (an allowance for service). *Malkiana* was, therefore, allowed only when the state directly assessed and collected the land revenue, by-passing the Zamindar. In addition to this principal fiscal claim the Zamindars seem often to have claimed a number of petty perquisites from the peasantry. At one place we find the levying of a poll-tax called *Dastar-Shumari* (counting of turbans) and cesses on marriages and births, and at another, a house tax and other cesses. Besides these, the Zamindars were sometimes entitled to extort unpaid labour services (*Begar*) from certain classes of persons. Balahars, Thoris, Dhanaks and Chamars had to act as guides and porters for their Zamindars and also apparently, for all men of Zamindar castes who happened to pass through their locality. There is, however, no contemporary evidence on record to the effect that the Zamindars used compulsory unpaid labour for their fields. In Rawalpindi, a few of the Zamindari villages were in the hands of a single individual; and some of the tribal chiefs held several villages in Zamindari. From whatever little knowledge we cull on the subject of land tenures, it can be safely concluded that trend was towards the reduction of the number of Zamindars. The reasons are easy to discern. The Zamindars, as a class were exploiters of the peasants in the sense that they claimed a share in the surplus produce of the peasantry. Though this share varied from place to place, it was on the whole a subordinate share compared with what was extorted from the peasants in the form of land revenue and other cesses and taxes in the name of the State. Secondly, they represented, in various ways, elements of despotism or of a power which was purely local. Their right over any particular land was hereditary and though clan movements or sales might interfere with Zamindari possession, a Zamindar's might would normally have the deepest roots in the land belonging for generations to his ancestors. His great advantages must have been his close knowledge of the productivity of the land and the customs and traditions of its inhabitants. Moreover, there was another important aspect which went counter to the general tenor of the Sikh scheme of things.

The Zamindari came into being possibly according to a set pattern. There is first, a settlement by members of a caste or class, perhaps, dominating over peasants settled earlier or perhaps, peasants themselves. Then another clan appears, drives them out

or establishes its domination over them; and then still another. At same stage, if not from the beginning, the domination of the victorious caste crystallises into Zamindari right, held by various leading members of it over different portions of the subjugated territory. It appears that the process continued down to the later Mughal period.

The association of Zamindars with a class or a group or a tribe lent to them a peculiar character which was not in consonance with the logic of casteless society which the Sikhs of the eighteenth century aspired to build (Refer to Rehatnamas, *Prem Sumarag*).

Besides this, local association also meant parochialism and circumscribing of the Zamindar's outlook.

Lastly the Zamindar class as it was usually bound up by its caste and local ties could not form any progressive reform or to side with any progressive movement. On the other hand, they, just to safeguard their interests, just swang their loyalties hither and thither for a political pattern; quite a large number of them kept retainers and did not defray their obligations towards the state.

From the point of productivity also the Zamindars were not liked. During the later Mughal period they extorted more from the peasants than what was due to them with the result that the morale of the peasants went down, causing a lot of damage to the extent of productivity.

In this context, the remarks of Baden Powell in his book *Land System*, ii, 623 are very important. He says that with an eye on the security and development of revenues, the Sikh rulers encouraged the actual cultivators as against the holders of superior ownership, which 'levelled down the differences and compelled an equality of the landlord and inferior'. Such people could obviously find no favour from the Sikh Sardars and if still Zamindari existed, that was merely a temporary arrangement to be used as an expedient rather than an abiding solution.

Taluqdari tenure also existed in the Sikh dominions in our period although the Sikh rulers were averse to its existence exactly for the reason they were to the Zamindari. By the later half of the 17th century, a special term came into use to designate a Zamindar in his aspect as payer of land revenue. Ta-alluq-dar means 'the holder of a ta-alluqa', the literal meaning of the latter word is 'connexion', but it was used in the sense of land or area

over which any kind of right was claimed. In the 18th century definition of Ta'alluq-dar, two separate statements occur: First, that he was just a kind of revenue farmer, and second, that he was a small Zamindar. Yasin's glossary, however, gives an explanation which shows how both these statements could be at the same time. A Ta'alluqdar we are told, was a Zamindar who contracted to pay revenue not only for his own Zamindari but also for the Zamindaris of other persons. This arrangement was usually made by the authorities to avoid having to deal with a large number of persons. Thus a Ta'alluqdar was not necessarily the Zamindar of the whole area for which he paid the revenue but only of a part of it, for the rest he was simply an intermediary. To be a Ta'alluqdar, therefore, was a smaller thing than to be a Zamindar of the same area, since the latter would hold the whole and not merely a part of it in Zamindari right, in addition to collecting and paying the revenue due from it. But generally speaking, Ta'alluqdar should be regarded a particular kind of Zamindar and in many contexts it seems to have been a matter of indifference which of the two terms was used.

As it has been pointed out in the preceding paragraph the Sikh rulers did not look upon the Ta'alluqdars with favour, still they had to tolerate them and some Ta'alluqdari tenures were, nonetheless, the creations of Sikh times.

"Several persons in the North-Western Punjab received *Chahrami* rights either from the Sikh rulers. Rai Jalal in Southern Rawalpindi, the Khattar, Ghebas and Jodhras in Attock and Fateh Jang, Umar Khan in Isa Khel, Fateh Khan Tiwana in Mitha Tiwana and Khushab were some of cases to illustrate the point. Under this arrangement one-fourth of the revenue due to the government went to the person who was given the right to *Chahrami*, literally one fourth."

"The proportion of cultivated land covered by Ta'alluqdari tenures was rather small" (Indu Banga—*Agrarian System of the Sikhs*—page 191).

Pattidari tenure was the next type of tenure which existed in the Sikh dominions. It was the sole creation of the Sikhs.

In the third quarter of the 18th century even a single horseman had sometimes got share in conquest and thus became a sharer of territory with the Chief. Such shares were divided amongst the descendants of the original co-sharers (Pattidars) in accordance with the custom of the clan to which the Pattidar

belonged whereas chief's territories were inherited by and large by one successor, the territory of Pattidar was divided amongst his descendants. The Pattidar like the chief respected old proprietary rights but asserted his right to a share of the produce. The descendants of a Pattidar, therefore, inherited their respective shares in produce from land held by others under various tenures. The prevailing custom was not to divide the land into horseman's share, each sharer attending at the harvest and taking his share of the governmental produce himself.

By far the bulk of land in the Punjab during Sikh rulers was held by small proprietors who cultivated their lands in whole or in part. The most incontrovertible evidence in support of the individual's right to property is provided by the known deeds of sale and mortgage. In Dera Ghazi Khan, even the Hindu traders were "always ready to advance money on lands and thus in time to become landed proprietors." (*Settlement Report Dera Ghazi Khan*—page 76). Under the Hath Rakhai transaction in Multan, a village body placed themselves by a fictitious sale or transfer under the protection of a more powerful Zamindari body. In some cases such 'protectors' absorbed the actual proprietary rights and the protected then sank to the level of tenants (Baden Powell, *Land Systems*, ii).

As a matter of fact, the Sikh rulers encouraged peasant proprietorship. This was the reason that the majority of the cultivators owed separate holdings which could be disposed of in any manner by them who could sell or mortgage them to their convenience. Of course the people of the village held preferential right over any outsider wishing to effect purchase or to get mortgaged a particular piece of land. That the Sikh Sardars' propensity was in favour of giving proprietary rights to the peasants, can be vouchsafed by various settlement reports. In the gazetteer of Rawalpindi it is remarked "wherever the proprietors proved to be refractory, the Sikh rulers did not hesitate to form the estate, locate cultivators with all the rights of property and expel the former owners." As per settlement report of Thanesar, for want of support to the Zamindaris during the Sikh times, the cultivators assumed proprietary rights in due course.

More or less quasi-proprietary tenures, known by different names existed in different parts of the Punjab. Malik-i-Qabza entitled the holder to full ownership of the land he occupied but not to any share in communal rights. The tenure known variously

as *Adhlapi*, *traddadkar*, and *Sildar* was prevalent in Dera Ghazi Khan, Jhang, Muzaffargarh. According to this form of tenure a man who sinks a well in land with owner's permission, becomes proprietor of half the land which it commands. He very commonly cultivates or arranges for the cultivation of the whole of the land takes half of the proprietor's share of the produce and pays half of the land revenue. The proprietorship awarded by such tenure was considered inferior as its possessor paid *Haqq-i-Zamindari* to the original proprietor (Malik-i-Ala) as quit rent. However, such proprietors could get their land cultivated by tenants.

Exact number of the tenants is not known nor anything can be said with certainty regarding the size of the area cultivated by them. The terms on which they cultivated lands belonging to the proprietors also varied from place to place.

The tenants of the Sikh dominions may be divided into two broad categories: *Muzari-an-i-Mustaqil* (tenants cultivating land from long past) and *Muzari-an-i-Ghair-Mustaqil* (those who held the land from proprietors only recently). The proprietor had the power and right to evict any tenant but such right was seldom exercised lest the estate should be under-cultivated. The *Mustaqil* tenants enjoyed greater security than the *Ghair-Mustaqil* but if the proprietor wanted the land for his own use, he could eject any tenant irrespective of the length or the character of his tenancy. Later on when the British administrators divided the tenants into occupancy tenants and tenants-at-will, they were in fact restating the traditions.

Out of the two categories tenants, *Mustaqil* tenants were preponderant and it is against this background that the British administrators of the revenue side found occupancy tenants in larger number than the *Ghair-Mustaqil* tenants.

Sikh rulers had been favourable to the permanence of the cultivator's occupancy. In their dealings with the tenants the Sikh rulers treated them essentially like proprietors allowing them generally to share in the payment of revenue. So long as the tenants paid the revenue to the state and charges due to the village or the proprietor, they were not ejected from their lands. They could cut trees for agricultural or domestic purposes but they could not sell them. Their tenure was inheritable but they could not in any way transfer their right of occupancy. As regards the rate of the government charges, the hereditary cultivators and the proprietor paid according to the same rates both as regards land



and water. In Ambala and Ludhiana, the Sikh ruler took the same payment and the same proportion of grain from the hereditary proprietor or from the hereditary cultivator or the mere tenant-at-will.

In addition to the land revenue and cesses and *Kamiana*, the tenants in many parts of the Sikh dominions had to pay *Malkiana* and other proprietary dues, the amount of which varied from place to place. In Jullundur the tenants paid 5 percent of the revenue as 'Lambardari allowance'. In Hoshiarpur, one fifth of the revenue was the maximum rate of *Malkiana* and the majority of the tenants paid no other dues. In Multan one-twentieth of gross produce was paid to the proprietors. In Gujrat, *Biswi*, and *Malkiana* dues were altogether unknown. In some parts of the Sikh dominions, the tenants paid numerous extra dues: *Jholi*, *Kiraya*, *Kiara*, *Amlana*, *Bhikh*, *Laigadhab*, *Bataliah* and *Mallea* for instance. Most of the tenants paid in kind whether they had to pay the dues to the State or to the proprietors. *Ghair-Mustaqil* tenants usually gathered half of the produce.

From the above account, a few conclusions can safely be hazarded. The Zamindari tenure, the Ta'alluqdari tenure were not to the liking of the Sikh rulers. They were inclined towards introduction of peasant proprietorship as also to improve the position of the tenants.

As a matter of fact, the position of the peasant proprietor improved during the Sikh times in relation to the Ta'alluqdar and the position of the tenant improved in relation to both the peasant proprietor and the Ta'alluqdar. Since peasant proprietors and tenants forming the bulk of population were relatively satisfied, they extended their support to the Sikh rulers. It is in this context that it can be said that peasantry in the Punjab, by and large, supported the Sikh rule, caring little for their religious affiliations, and this single factor was responsible to a great extent to motivate the Sikh rulers to follow liberal and secular policies.

This thing had its effect on Sikhism also which began to be looked upon as the religion of the people for their uplift and betterment. This is why that Sikh religion reaped a rich harvest of conversions during the 18th century in spite of the determined efforts of the ruling class to colour the Sikhs as inveterate foes of Musalmans.

That the significance of this economic factor was not taken cognizance of during the last few decades of the 18th century and

trends unsuited to the Sikh spirit as well as to the interests of the general people were allowed to develop and grow, brings into sharp focus the failure of Sikh mind to advance further in the direction of egalitarian society. Land as a factor of production should have been regarded as common ownership of the society but alas, lure of being privileged instead of being equal, swayed them away from the right path, perhaps under the weight of Mughal Political tradition or the Varan Ashram tradition of Hindu Society.

## APPENDICES



## APPENDIX I

# LIST OF THE GOVERNORS OF THE PUNJAB

### A. Later Mughal Period 1119-1173 A.H. 1708-1759 A.D.

| A.H.          |  | A.D.      |
|---------------|--|-----------|
| 1. 1119-1124  | Sayyed Aslam Khan<br>(Deputy Governor)       | 1708-1712 |
| 2. 1124-1125  | Zabardast Khan<br>(Ali Mardan Khan)          | 1712-1713 |
| 3. 1125-1150  | Abdus Samad Khan Bahadur<br>(Diler Jang)     | 1713-1737 |
| 4. 1150-1158  | Zakariya Khan (Azadud<br>Daula Khan Bahadur) | 1737-1745 |
| 5. 1158       | Yahiya Khan                                  | 1745      |
| 6. 1158-1161  | Shah Nawaz Khan                              | 1745-1748 |
| 7. 1161       | Jumla Khan                                   | 1748      |
| 8. 1161-1167  | (Muin-ul-Mulk) Mir Mannu                     | 1748-1753 |
| 9. 1167-1169  | Amin-ud-Din Khan                             | 1753-1755 |
| 10. 1169-1170 | Adina Beg Khan                               | 1755-1756 |
| 11. 1170-1171 | Timur Shah                                   | 1757-1758 |
| 12. 1171      | Adina Beg Khan                               | 1758      |
| 13. 1171-1172 | Khwaja Mirza Khan                            | 1758-1759 |
| 14. 1172      | Sama (Maratha)                               | 1759      |

### B. Viceroys of Ahmad Shah Abdali 1173-1182 A.H. 1759-1768 A.D.

|              |                                       |           |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. 1173      | Haji Karim Dad Khan                   | 1759      |
| 2. 1173-1174 | Sarbuland Khan                        | 1760-1761 |
| 3. 1174-1175 | Khwaja Ubaid Khan                     | 1761-1762 |
| 4. 1175-1177 | (Ahmad Shah was himself<br>at Lahore) | 1762-1763 |
| 5. 1177-1181 | Kabuli Mal                            | 1763-1767 |
| 6. 1181-1182 | Dadan Khan                            | 1767-1768 |

C. Sikh Rulers 1182-1265 A.H.  
1768-1849 A.D.

| A.H.   |           |                  | A.D.      |      |
|--------|-----------|------------------|-----------|------|
|        | 1206      | Gujjar Singh     |           | 1791 |
| 1 to 3 | 1182      | 1213 Lehna Singh | 1768      | 1798 |
|        |           | 1212 Sobha Singh |           | 1797 |
| 4.     | 1206      | Sahib Singh      | 1791      |      |
| 5.     | 1213      | 1214 Chet Singh  | 1798      | 1799 |
| 6.     | 1212      | Muhr Singh       | 1797      |      |
| 7.     | 1214-1255 | Ranjit Singh     | 1799-1839 |      |



## APPENDIX II

### ZAIN KHAN

Zain Khan was an important Afghan officer who played important role in the history of the Punjab. He was appointed as Faujdar of Char Mahal, when in 1759 Karim Dad Khan was made Governor of the Punjab. He did good job as Faujdar.

In March 1760, he was recalled along with Karim Dad Khan to help Ahmad Shah Abdali in his proposed task of defeating the Marathas. On March 29, 1761 Ahmad Shah Abdali appointed him as governor of Sirhind. According to Dr. H.R. Gupta, he along with other important officers was instructed to punish the Sikhs.

Zain Khan, true to the instructions, followed ruthless policy of persecution. One glaring example of his intolerance was the execution of Sardar Dayal Singh Brar. This naturally infuriated the Sikhs, who made a resolve to punish Zain Khan. The Sikhs exacted tribute from the neighbourhood of Sirhind. Once Lakshmi Narain, the Diwan of Sirhind Governor, was on his tour of collection, he was attacked by the Sikh desperadoes and was deprived of his collection. Such was the terror struck in the heart of Zain Khan and his Diwan that they remained confined into their fort.<sup>1</sup>

In the Ghallughara, Zain Khan played a notorious role. He, at the call of Ahmad Shah Abdali, marched out from Sirhind for an attack on the Sikh forces gathered near Malerkotla. This fact left an incurable scar on the minds of the Sikhs who turned with rage against Zain Khan.

Within four months of the Ghallughara (May, 1762) the Sikhs decided to measure swords with Zain Khan, and marching in a strong body invaded Sirhind.<sup>2</sup> In the action that followed, they defeated Zain Khan and laid him under heavy tribute. A Marathi letter dated June, 1762 written from Lahore by Bapu, then in attendance upon Ahmad Shah Abdali, to Dada gives the following details about this campaign.

1. Rattan Singh, *Panth Parkash*, p. 370.

2. Sarkar, *Decline and Fall of the Mughal Empire*, ii, p. 490.

"I had formerly reported that the Sikhs had caused disturbances in Sirhind district. Recently Zain Khan, the Faujdar of the place placated the Sikhs by paying down Rs. 50,000. The Sikhs marched away 30 or 35 Kos when Zain Khan treacherously looted their (rear) baggage. So the Sikhs turned back, plundered the baggage of Zain Khan, looted his Diwan Lachhmi Narain. Afterwards a (pitched) battle was decided upon. The two sides are fighting at Haraulgarh, 45 Kos from Sirhind."

Ahmad Shah Abdali once again came to Zain Khan's help and restored him to the Governorship of Sirhind before leaving for Kabul. He, however, was not relieved of the pressure of the Sikhs which continued to mount consistently. They exacted tribute from the neighbouring territories of Sirhind and brought about financial crisis for Zain Khan. He could not pay his salaries to his retainers, who became rebellious. This state of affairs heavily told upon his temper and he became cruel and resorted to the meanest methods of extorting money from the inhabitants of Sirhind and its surrounding villages. Tahmasp Khan, one of the retainers of Zain Khan, who was with him in Sirhind, has graphically described his Master's cruel exactions in the following words :

"I found a change in the temper of Zain Khan who leaving aside the old practices and laws, sacked villages for nothing. The grain which he collected in this way was distributed as one-fourth of their pay to the persons who demanded it. He collected money by unpleasant methods which are far from being wise and which bring ruin. I find that the town of Sirhind has been ruined and people are fleeing from Sirhind. In our presence Zain Khan sent orders to all ferries and posts to the effect that whosoever is wearing a cap, is a deserter from the royal army and is fleeing to Shah Jahanabad, he should be killed and his baggage should be confiscated because all these cap-wearers are the servants of the Shah. In this way and by such orders, he thought of extracting money from the travellers just for nothing."

Zain Khan had realized that the time for the final struggle with the Sikhs had come. He was depressed because he could not expect any help from any quarter. Ahmad Shah Durrani was at Kandhar, and he could not be called so soon; while his friend, the Nawab of Malerkotla, was dead. Sardar Yar Khan in the Jullundur Doab commanded no good troops. The local chiefs of some importance were hostile to him for his high-handedness. Kabuli Mal, the Lahore Subedar, was like a bird without wings

on account of his poor resources. Thus Zain Khan, entirely left to his own resources, had to combat the bold, and courageous Sikhs, superior in numbers, single-handed.

The Sikhs under the over-all leadership of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia lay encamped in three divisions. The six Misls of the Budha Dal under Jassa Singh were stationed at Bhaganpur, while the other five Misls (Taruna Dal) were at Panja and the Phulkian Misl was still at Patiala. Zain Khan was informed of this situation and he determined to take advantage of their scattered forces. One night he suddenly issued out of Sirhind and attacked the Taruna Dal near a village named Pir Zain Khan Munayra (12 Kos east of Sirhind).

Luckily the Sikhs had decided the preceding evening to make a united attack on Sirhind, and all the three sections of them were already on the move from their encampments. The news of Zain Khan's attack was immediately conveyed to the other two bodies and in a short time they surrounded Zain Khan on all sides, cutting off all his ways of escape. Zain Khan was thus caught between the jaws of a nutcracker, as the Sikhs had been two years previously.

Zain Khan was forced to fight and he found himself unable to cope with the situation. He maintained his position in the night, and in the early hours of the morning he began to send out his detachments with guns, swivels and matchlocks with a view to diverting the attention of the Sikhs towards them, so that he might find time to escape. He was partially successful in his plan because the Taruna Dal actually fell upon the baggage and busied themselves in plunder. But the Budha Dal under Jassa Singh Ahluwalia besieged him while he had gone only a little farther.

Zain Khan evaded his besiegers for some time more, but in his attempt to escape, he was shot dead. His Afghan troops fled in all directions in a state of panic. They were hotly pursued and cut to pieces indiscriminately. Thus the Sikhs achieved this grand success quite unexpectedly, because they had not come to this side for this purpose. This event is said to have taken place on the 4th Magh Samvat 1820 (14th January, 1764).

### APPENDIX III

## MIRZA ASKARI (WAZIR KHAN)

Wazir Khan was a native of Kunjpura (now in the district of Karnal). He was appointed Faujdar of Sirhind during the closing years of Emperor Aurangzeb's reign. He continued to hold that position under Shah Alam Bahadur Shah till he was defeated and killed by Banda Bahadur in 1710. He held the charge of civil and revenue affairs of that Sarkar for a long time. According to Khafi Khan he had some troops and treasure and had earned reputation for his firm management.<sup>1</sup> It appears that he was a staunch Sunni Muslim. He was a trusted official of Aurangzeb. Towards the close of his reign, Aurangzeb's religious policy was of swinging towards orthodoxy, Wazir Khan spared no pains to execute it faithfully. The last Mughal campaign against Anandpur under Emperor Aurangzeb's order was led by Wazir Khan. When the combined forces of the Mughals and of the Hill Rajas failed to take the place by assault, he took to a stratagem. He called a Sayyed (as the descendants of Ali are called) and a Brahmin both of whom were to swear respectively by the Holy Quran and the sacred Cow on behalf of the allied armies, solemn oaths of safe conduct for the Guru should he vacate Anandpur. The Guru believing Wazir Khan and his allies, vacated the fort along with his followers. But soon Wazir Khan's soldiers in violation of the oath attacked the Guru's followers during the retreat on the night of Poh 6-7, 1762 B.K. (December 5-6, 1705), and killed a large number of them. The Guru himself was surrounded and besieged at Chamkaur (December 8, 1705). During the battle some of his closest associates and two elder sons, Ajit Singh and Jujhar Singh aged 16 and 14, respectively, were killed and he could escape from their clutches only under the cover of darkness of night.

During the sudden attack of the combined forces of Wazir Khan of Sirhind and his allies on the bank of the Sirsa rivulet,

---

1. Khafi Khan, *Muntakba-ul-Lubab*, translated by Elliot & Dowson, vol viii, p. 414.

the retreating Sikhs were scattered in different directions and camel loads of their property and manuscripts were sunk. While the Guru had crossed the rivulet towards Chamkaur and his wives had moved towards Delhi, his aged mother and younger sons, Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh, strayed away with no place to go to. At the time, they fell in with an old Brahmin servant named Gangu. He first took them to his village Saheri on the Ropar-Morinda road and then betrayed them to the Pathan officials of Morinda, who, in turn handed them over to Faujdar Wazir Khan at Sirhind.

Wazir Khan had returned to Sirhind greatly frustrated at the escape of Guru Gobind Singh from Chamkaur. With his conscience deadened, he found in the young sons of the Guru, an easy target to satisfy his inner vengeful self. They were only nine and seven years old. But their tender ages failed to move Wazir Khan's pitiless heart. And as the tradition had it, on their refusal to accept Islam, he ordered them to be bricked up alive. But the trembling hands of the mason could not, evidently, raise a firm structure which tumbled down as it rose above the shoulders of the half-conscious children struggling for breath. They were removed to Thanda Burj or cold tower nearby. This was on the 11th of Poh 1762 B.K. (December 10, 1705). But it was not the end of the dreadful story. The worst had yet to come. On the 13th Poh/December 12, the boys were called by the Nawab to the court again and finding them firm and persistent in their conviction, he ordered them to be put to death in his very presence. With a view to smash out of existence the Sikh movement, Wazir Khan's soldiers conducted pursuit of Guru Gobind Singh till battle of Mukatsar was fought and Wazir Khan convinced that henceforward Guru Gobind Singh would be ineffective, at least militarily. Later on when the relations between Bahadur Shah and Guru Gobind Singh moved towards cordiality, Wazir Khan felt much upset as he feared that he might be taken to task by the Emperor for his excesses against Guru Gobind Singh. He therefore, according to the Chaturjugi, deputed two of his trusted men to do away with the Guru before he could return to the Punjab from Nanded in the Deccan where he was staying along with the Emperor. These hirelings of Wazir Khan stabbed the Guru in the stomach on December 7, 1708 (Katik Sudi 5, 1765 B.K.).

Banda Bahadur took terrible revenge for the death of Sahibzadas by killing Wazir Khan and his henchmen, such as Sucha Nand and others in A.D. 1710 at the battle of

Chapparchiri.<sup>1</sup>

It is stated when Wazir Khan heard that the districts in charge had been ravaged and plundered, he set about collecting troops and warlike equipments. He joined with his four or five Faujdars and Zamindars, prepared lead and gunpowder, mustered five to six thousand horse and seven or eight thousand musketeers and archers, and with these and some artillery and elephants, he marched out to give battle and to punish that perverse sect. After marching three or four Kos, he came up with the enemy.<sup>2</sup>

"The accursed wretch had got warning of movement of Wazir Khan and advanced to meet him. All his followers (of Banda) kept shouting Sacha Padshah and Fateh Daras. The battle began and great bravery was shown on both sides but especially by the confederate sectarians. They advanced swords in hand against the elephants and brought two of them down. Many Musalmans found martyrdom and many of the infidels went into the sink of perdition. The Muslim forces were hardly able to endure the repeated attacks of the infidels. When a musket ball made a martyr of Wazir Khan, they were put to flight. Many horses and elephants fell into the hands of the infidels, and not a man of the army of Islam escaped with more than his life and the clothes he stood in. Horsemen and footmen in great numbers fell under the swords of the infidels who pursued them as far as Sirhind." (Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab-ul-Lubab*, tr. Elliot and Dowson, vol. vii, p. 414-415).

---

1. Kahan Singh, *Mahankosh*, p. 809.

2. Khafi Khan, *Muntakhab-ul-Lubab*, tr. Elliot and Dowson, vol. vii, p. 414.



## Bibliography

### PERSIAN SOURCES

Abdul Karim Kashmiri : *Bayan-i-Waqei*, 1752-8 A.D. contemporary.

Abdul Karim Ulavi : *Tarikh-i-Ahmed*, also called *Tawarikh-i-Ahmad*,  
Mustafa Press, Lucknow, 1850 MS.

Abdul Qadir Khan *alias* Ghulam Qadir Khan Jaisi : *Tarikh-i-Imad-ul-  
Mulk*, Khalsa College Library, Amritsar.

Ahmad Yadgar : *Tarikh-i-Slatin-i-Afghana*, not dated.

*Abwal-i-Adina Beg Khan* : According to Dr. Ganda Singh, 'In all  
probability, the *Abwal-i-Adina Beg Khan* is written by some disciple  
or Munshi of Sodhi Wadbhag Singh.'

*Ali-ud-Din Mufti* : *Ibratnama*, Mss. 1854 A.D., Khalsa College, Amritsar.

Anand Ram Mukhlis : *Tuzkirah-i-Anandram*, Anandram Mukhlis son of  
Raja Hirde Ram Khatri was the resident of Lahore. In 1719-20 he was  
appointed Vakil for Nawab Qamaruddin Khan, and was also a Vakil  
for Nawab Abdus Samad Khan.

*Asrar-i-Samadi* (1728-29) : Author was some Munshi of Abdus Samad  
Khan. Valuable information regarding Banda Bahadur and Abdus  
Samad Khan.

Bakht Mall : *Khalsa Nama (1810-14)* : MS. Punjab University, History of  
the Sikhs written under the patronage of Bhai Lal Singh of Kaithal.

Budh Singh Arora : *Risalah-i-Nanak Shah*, Mss. Khalsa College, Amritsar.  
A history of the Sikhs written for James Browne of East India  
Company's service, about 1785, with the collaboration of Munshi  
Ajaib Singh of Malerkotla.

Bute Shah *alias* Gulam Muhi-ud-Din : *Tarikh-i-Punjab*, Mss. 1848, Khalsa  
College, Amritsar. Translated and published by Punjabi University,  
Patiala.

*Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, Volumes v, vi, vii. From 1776 to  
1787, being letters which passed between some of the Company's  
servants and Indian rulers and notables, published by Imperial  
Records Department, now known as National Archives.

Dalpat Rai : *Amir-ul-Imla (1795)*, Mss. A collection of letters mostly of  
the Sikh Chiefs of the Punjab addressed to one another, relating to  
private and public affairs.

- Ganesh Das Badehra : *Risala-e-Sahib Numa or Cbabar Gulshan-i-Punjab*, 1855 A.D.
- Ghulam Ali Khan Azad Bilgrami : *Khazanah-i-Amira*, contemporary work completed in about 1763, printed at Cawnpur, 1871-1900. It gives account of Durrani's invasions, Wadda Ghallughara.
- Ghulam Ali : *Shah Alam Namah* : Ghulam Ali, its author was son of Bhikhari Khan who was murdered in Lahore by Mughalani Begum in 1753; 1788, printed by Asiatic Society of Bengal.
- Ghulam Hussain Khan : *Siyar-ul-Mutakharin*, Calcutta 1836, Cawnpur 1897. A comprehensive History of India from A.D. 1706 to A.D. 1780.
- Halat-i-Abd-i-Maharaja Sahib Singh* (Anonymous), Mss. M/937, Punjab State Archives, Patiala.
- Haqiqat-i-Bina-Uruj-i-Firqa-i-Sikhan* : Khalsa College, Amritsar.
- Imam-ud-din Husaini, Sayyed : *Tarikh-i-Husain Shahi*, 1798 Ms.
- Kamvar Khan : *Tazkirat-us-Salatin-i-Chaughatiya* (1723) Mss. Punjab University.
- Kashi Raj : *Abwal-i-Jang-i-Bhau va Ahmed Shah Durrani* : Khalsa College, Amritsar, translated into English by H.G. Rowbinson.
- Khushwaqt Rai : *Tarikh-i-Sikhan* (1811) MS. Punjabi University, Patiala. History of the Sikhs written under the aegis of Colonel David Ochterlony.
- Kirpa Ram : *Gulab Nama*.
- Muhammad Harisi : *Ibrat Nama*.
- Muhammad Jafar Shamlu : *Tarikh-i-Manzil-ul-Fatah*, Mss. Retrograph—J.N. Sarkar's library, Calcutta.
- Muhammad Qasim : *Ibrat Nama* (1719) Mss. Contemporary account of Banda Singh Bahadur.
- Nur Muhammad Maulvi : *Tarikh-i-Jhang Siyal*.
- Nur Muhammad Qazi : *Jang Nama*, completed in 1765.
- Shah Nawaz Khan Shams-ud-Daula : *Masir-ul-Umara*, 3 Volumes, a biography dictionary of the Mughal peerage from Akbar's time till the middle of the 18th century.
- Sohan Lal Suri : *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* : also its Pbi. trans. Punjabi University, Patiala.
- Sujan Rai Bhandari : *Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh*.
- Tahmas Khan : *Tahmas Namah*, an autobiography of Tahmas Khan who had been in the service of Mir Muin-ul-Mulk, his widow Murad Begum (Mughlani Begum), Zain Khan of Sirhind and Zabita Khan Ruhila, Mss. Punjab University.
- Tahmas Khan Miskin : *Tazkira-i-Tahmash*, Mss. Punjab University.
- Tawarikh-i-Khandan-i-Maharaja Karam Singh va Khandan-i-Phulkian*, Mss. Punjab State Archives, Patiala.

Yar Muhammad Qalandar (1710): *Dastur-ul-Insha*, Mss. 1710 (Khuda Bakhsh Library, Patna). Provides information about Baba Banda Singh Bahadur's early period.

### PUNJABI SOURCES

Ganesha Singh, Mahant: *Itihas Nirmal Bhekh*, published by Mahant Hari Singh, Amritsar.

Gyan Singh: *Panb Parkash*.

Gyani Garja Singh: *Shabeed Bilas* by Sewa Singh and edited by Garja Singh, published by Punjabi Sahitya Academy, Ludhiana, 1961.

Kahan Singh: *Maban Kosh*.

Karam Singh: *Mabaraja Ala Singh-1918*, published by Chief Khalsa Dewan, Amritsar. The book is based on original sources and is very valuable.

Kesar Singh Chibbar: *Bansavli Nama Dasan Padshubian*, Sikh Reference Library, S.G.P.C. (1780).

Ram Sukh Rao: *Jassa Singh Binod*, compiled during reign of Fateh Singh. Ms. Punjab State Archives, Patiala.

Rattan Singh Bhangu: *Prachin Panb Parkash* (1841), Wazir Hind Press, Amritsar, 1939.

Surat Singh and Darbara Singh: *Itihas-Ramgarhian*, Vol. I, printed in 1913.

Anonymous: *Prem Sumarg*.

Tek Singh, *Chaturjugi*, Ms. Bhai Vir Singh Private Collections, Amritsar.

### ENGLISH SOURCES

Bajwa, Fauja Singh: *Military System of the Sikhs*, Moti Lal Banarasi Das, Delhi, 1964.

Banga, Indu: *Agrarians System of the Sikhs: Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century*, Manohar Publications, Delhi, 1978.

Bhagat Singh: *Sikh Polity in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, Oriental Publications, Delhi, 1975.

*A History of Sikh Misss*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1993.

Browne, James: *History of the Origin and Progress of the Sikhs* (India Tracts), The East India Company Press, London, 1788.

*Calcutta Review*, Volume ii, x, xi.

Charles Francis Massy: *Chiefs and Families of Note*, 1890.

*Colonel Polier's Account of the Sikhs*: Colonel Polier compiled an account of the Sikhs in the early seventies of the 18th century.

Cunningham, Joseph Davey: *A History of the Sikhs*, reprint, S. Chand and Co., Delhi, 1972.

Anonymous, *Delhi Chronicle or Waqa-i-Shah Alam Sani*, 1738-98.

*District Gazetteers of Punjab*, Original Edition.

- Douie, J.M. : *Punjab Land Administration*.
- Elliot, H.M. : *History of India*, as told by her own historians, edited by Elliot and Dowson, vol. viii, London, 1877.
- Elphinstone, Mountstuart, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul and its Dependencies in Persia, Tartary and India, etc.*, 2 vols., London, 1815.
- Forster, George : *A Journey from Bengal to England through the Northern Parts of India*, 1782-83, vol. I, Punjab Language Department (1970 reprint).
- Franklin, William : *The History of the Reign of Shah Alam*, London, printed for the author by Cooper and Graham, 1798.
- Ganda Singh, (ed), *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, Indian Stories past and present, Calcutta, 1962 (reprint).
- Ganda Singh, *Abmed Shah Durrani*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1959.
- Gandhi, S.S. : *History of the Sikh Gurus*, published by Gurdas Kapur and Sons, Chauri Bazar, Delhi, 1978.
- Voice of Guru Gobind Singh*, printed in 1966.
- Grey, C. : *European Adventures of Northern India*, 1785 to 1849, edited by H.I. Cgarrot, Government Printing Press, Lahore, 1929.
- George, Thomas : *Military Memoirs of George Thomas* compiled and arranged from Thomas's original documents by William Franklin, printed at the Harkarn Press, Calcutta, 1803.
- Griffin, Sir Lepel : *The Punjab Chiefs*, M.G. Press, Lahore, 1890, 2 vols. *Rajas of the Punjab*, Punjab Printing Press, Lahore 1870, Patiala 1970.
- Griffin, Sir Lepel and C.F. Massy, *Chiefs and Families of Note in the Punjab*, Government Printing Press, Lahore, 1909.
- Gupta, Hari Ram : *History of the Sikhs*, vol. I, 1739-68, Calcutta, 1939; vol. II, *Cis-Satluj Sikhs*, 1769-99, Lahore, 1944; Vol. III, *Trans-Satluj*, Lahore 1949, Adina Beg, JPUHS, December 1940.
- Hutchinson, J. and Vegal, J.Ph. : *History of Punjab Hill States*, 2 volumes, Government Printing Press, Lahore, 1933.
- Imperial Gazetteer of India, Provincial Series*, Punjab, 2 volumes, Calcutta 1908.
- Irfan, Habib : *An Atlas of Mughal Empire*, Political and Economic maps with detailed notes, Bibliography and Index, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1982.
- Irvine H. : *Later Mughals*.
- Jamal Khwaja : *Zest for Islam*, printed by Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1977.
- Kohli, Sita Ram : *Sunset of the Sikh Empire*, printed by Orient Longman, 1967.
- Lachhman Singh, Bhagat : *Sikh Martyrs*, Madras, 1928.
- Latif, Sayyid Muhammad : *A History of the Punjab*, Calcutta, 1891.

- Malcolm, Sir John : *Sketch of the Sikhs*, London, John Murray, 1812.
- Malik Arjan Das : *An Indian Gurella War*, New Delhi, 1975.
- Marenco Ethnek : *The Transformation of Sikh Society*.
- Mazahar-ul-Haq : *Social Pathology and Muslim Society*, 1978.
- McLeod, W.H. : *The Evolution of the Sikh Community*, Printed in 1975.
- Mohammad Akbar : *Lahore Past and Present*, Punjab University Press, 1952.
- Punjab Administration Report, 1849-50.*
- Report on the Census of the Punjab, 1881, Book No. 1.*
- Sahni, Ruchi Ram : *Struggle for Freedom in Sikh Shrines*, edited by Ganda Singh.
- Sarkar, J.N. : *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, vol. I to 3, Ms. Sarkar, Calcutta, 1932.
- Shahamat Ali, *The History of Bahawalpur*, London, 1848.
- Teja Singh : *Sikhism, Its Ideas and Institutions*, Lahore Book Shop, Lahore, 1944.
- Zakir-ud-din Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah*, Bombay, 1977.

#### URDU SOURCES

- Gyan Singh, Gyani : *Raj Khalsa*, 2 volumes, Wazir Hind Press, Amritsar, 1925.
- Shamsber Khalsa*, Wazir Hind Press, Amritsar, 1923.
- Kanhiya Lal : *Tarikh-i-Punjab*, New Imperial Press, 1887.
- Khalifa Saiyad Muhammad Hassan : *Tarikh-i-Patiala*, 1878.
- Tulsi Ram : *Twarikh-i-Izla-i-In Rue-Sultuj*, 1856. MS.

#### INDIAN NATIONAL ARCHIVES

- Foreign Department, Political Proceedings*
- 1796 : 17th October, Nos. 34, 35, 28th, Nos. 22, 21.
- Foreign Political Consultations, 1797, 9th June, No. 70.
- 1798 : 29th October, No. 25; December 14th, No. 11, 17, 26; 24th, Nos. 7, 17, 20, 21, 22, 24, 26, 28.
- 1799 : 8th February, No. 21; 10th May, No. 7; August 15th, No. 4 : December 10th.
- Secret Letters to Court*
- Volume x. 1794-1796, pp. 360-61.
- Volume xii. 1797-1802, pp. 5-7, 17.
- Secret Department*
- 1796 : September 5th, No. 50.
- Secret Letters from Court*
- Volume 1786-1801, pp. 222-93
- Foreign Department - Miscellaneous Records, vol. 206, pp. 55-8.

## MARATHI SOURCES

- Dilliethil : *Dilliyethil Raj Karnen*, Vols. 2, also additional part of volume ii by Rao Bahadur D.B. Parasnis. It is a collection of letters written by Maratha Agents at Delhi to the Peshwa from 1780-1795.
- S.P.D., *Selections from the Peshwa's Daftar*, 45 volumes, edited by G.S. Sardesai : Volumes 2, 20, 21, 27 and 29 in Mathi band. Miscellaneous papers in Persian have been chiefly consulted.

## DISTRICT GAZETTEERS

- Amritsar (1883-4 and 1892-3) : Attock (1883-1884) : Bahawalpur (1904) : Chenab Colony (1904) : Dera Ghazi Khan (1883-84) : Dera Ismail Khan (1883-84) : Ferozpur (1883-84) : Gujranwala (1883-84, 1895, 1935) : Gujrat (1883-84) : Hoshiarpur (1883-84) : Jhelum (1883-84) : Jullunder and Kapurthala (1904) : Kangra (1883-84) : Lahore (1883-84) : Montgomery (1883-84) : Multan (1883-84) : Muzaffargarh (1919) : Rawalpindi (1895 and 1907) : Shahpur (1883-84) : Sialkot (1895 and 1928).

## SETTLEMENT REPORTS

- Anderson, A., *Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Siba Jagir in the Kangra District (1881-82)*.
- Barnes, G.C. and J.B. Lyall, *Report of the Law Revenue Settlement, the Kangra District*.
- Carriot, Major J.G., *Report on the Settlement of the Rawalpindi District (1865)*.
- Davies, R.H. and M.Blyth, *Report on the Revised Settlement of the Umritsar, Saurian and Tarn Taran Parganahs, (1860)*.
- Mackenzie, Capt. Hector, *Report on the Revised Settlement of the Goojrat District in the Rawalpindi Division, Lahore, 1861*.
- Monektov, C.S., *Report on the Settlement of the Jbung District, Lahore (1860)*.
- Nisbet, R.P., *Report on the Revision of the Land Revenue Settlement of the Gujranwala District (1879-84)*, Calcutta, 1885.
- O'Brien, Edward, *Report on the Law Revenue Settlement of the Mazaffar District (1873-80)*.
- Princep, E.A., *Report on the Revised Settlement of Sialkot District, Lahore, 1865*.
- Roe, C.A. and W.E. Purser, *Report on the Revised Law Revenue Settlement of the Montgomery District (1874)*, Lahore, 1878.
- Saunders, L.S., *Report on the Revised Settlement of the Lahore District (1865-69)*, Lahore, 1873.



- Smith Capt. J Dunlop, *Final Report on the Revised Settlement of Sialkot District (1885-95)*, Lahore, 1895.
- Steedman, E.B., *Report on the Revised Settlement of the Jhang District (1874-80)*, Lahore, 1882.
- Temple, R.G., *A Report of the Second Regular Settlement of the Land Revenue of the Jehlum District*, Lahore, 1883.
- Walker, G.C., *Final Report on the Revision of Settlement of the Lahore District*, Lahore, 1894.
- Water Field, W.G., *Report on the Second Regular Settlement of the Gujrat District (1866-68)*, Lahore, 1874.



## Index

### A

- Abdali's Seventh Invasion 290  
Abdul Majid Khan 130  
Abdul Ahad Khan 400, 408, 421,  
422, 500, 510, 544, 546, 548,  
549, 552, 553, 555, 579, 614  
Abdul Aziz Khan 189  
Abdul Mansur Khan, Prince 156  
Abdul Qasim 184, 421, 547  
Abdul Samad Khan 494  
Abdulla Khan Burha, Sayyid 41  
Abdullah Khan/Khwaja/Maulvi 184,  
200, 238, 239, 300  
Abdur Razzaq, Qazi 100, 102  
Abdus Samad Khan 48, 50, 75, 132,  
224, 254, 264, 592  
Achal 462, 476  
Adalitis 371  
Adina Beg, Khan 129, 131, 142,  
150, 151, 180, 181, 182, 185,  
192, 201, 203, 218, 224, 228,  
229, 230, 232, 234, 236, 237,  
239, 240, 241, 244, 245, 263,  
301, 395, 420, 467, 494, 589  
Adina Nagar 526  
Afrasiyab Khan 549, 562, 599  
Afzal Khan 540  
Aghar Khan 40  
Ahad Khan 553  
Ahlu 393  
Ahluwalia Misl 390, 393  
Ahmad Khan 146  
Ahmad Shah Khan Bangash 252,  
253, 256  
Ahmad Khan, Mirza 248  
Ahmad Shah Abdali/Durrani 130,  
131, 143, 144, 159, 162, 172,  
175, 180, 183, 192, 198, 207,  
210, 212, 223, 233, 243, 244,  
249, 250, 252, 253, 264, 272,  
286, 396, 398, 400, 406, 415,  
417, 444, 448, 454, 481, 484,  
494, 495, 498, 541, 588, 593,  
594, 595, 596  
Ahmad Shah Shahanchi Basi 582  
Ahmad Yar Khan 465  
Ahwale-i-Adina-Beg Khan 246, 468  
Ajit Singh 36, 83  
Akalgarrh 521  
Akbar 578  
Akbar Shah, Prince 582  
Ala Singh 101, 213, 224, 274, 299,  
413, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493,  
494, 495, 496, 595, 605  
Alam Khan 554  
Alam, Shah 585  
Alam Singh 508  
Alamgir II 207  
Alamgir Sani 251  
Alghazais 342  
Ali Bahadur 431  
Ali Gauhar, Prince 238  
Ali Khan, Darvesh 300  
Ali Muhammad Khan 492, 493  
Ali Muhammad Khan Rohilla 180  
Ali Singh 30  
Ali-ud-Din Mufti 196  
Alif Khan 397

- Aligarh 559  
 Allahdad Khan Biowala 491  
 Amar Singh Bagga 422  
 Amar Singh Kangra 422  
 Amar Singh Man 518  
 Amar Singh, Raja 399, 400, 408,  
 422, 434, 497, 498, 499, 500,  
 501, 502, 510, 511, 545, 554,  
 586, 608  
 Ambahta 545  
 Ambaji Ingle 435, 503, 504, 565, 566,  
 600, 601, 606  
 Ambheta 407  
 Ambo Khan of Kalanaur 405  
 Amin Khan 198  
 Amir Khan 106  
 Amritsar 116, 391, 583, 584  
 Anand Dev 79  
 Anderson 603  
 Anta Rao 511  
 Anta Rao and Lachhman Rao 431  
 Antaji Manakeshwar 593  
 Anup Shahar 538  
 Anup Singh 422, 435  
 Aqil Das 241, 270, 271, 342  
 Arjmund, Mian 199  
 Arnaulagarh 596  
 Arz Begi 300  
 Asad Ali Khan, Nawab 490  
 Asaf Jah 199  
 Asif-ud-Daula, Nawab 451  
 Asmat Beg Khan, Mirza 189  
 Asmat-Ullah Khan, Khwaja 150  
 Asrar-i-Samadi 53  
 Attock 583  
 Aurangabad 522  
 Aurangzeb 578  
 Aziz Khan 395
- B**
- Badal Khan 407  
 Badar Singh 393  
 Badrukhan 508  
 Bagh Singh Hallowalia 91, 95  
 Baghel Singh Karorsinghia 400,  
 402, 407, 409, 420, 421, 422,  
 423, 424, 426, 427, 430, 431,  
 432, 433, 441, 498, 500, 521,  
 532, 538, 553, 556, 559, 560,  
 563, 565, 567, 571, 576, 583,  
 601, 606, 607, 608  
 Bahadur Shah 45, 75  
 Bahar Khan 491  
 Baharmand Ali Khan 574  
 Baharwal 464  
 Bahmani 273  
 Bahram Quli Khan 579  
 Baj Singh 26, 30, 52  
 Bakhshi Gazi Beg Khan 199  
 Bakhshi-ul-Mumalik Saadat Khan  
 130  
 Bakht Mal 575  
 Bakht Singh 610  
 Bakhtawarpur 601  
 Balachaur 397  
 Balaji Ingle 608  
 Balaji Rao Peshwa 589  
 Balwant Ganesh Mahendale 253  
 Balwant Rao Mehendale 254  
 Banda Singh Bahadur 98, 335, 437  
 Banga 520  
 Banga Singh 538  
 Baporai 248  
 Bapuji Malhar 571, 601  
 Barari Ghat 251, 594, 601  
 Barkhurdar Khan 300  
 Barnala 274  
 Bars 376  
 Base Areas 376  
 Batala 462, 472  
 Battle of Barnala 490  
 Battle of Panipat 253, 396, 494  
 Baz Bahadur 34  
 Bazid Khan Kasuria 236

- Begam Samru 425, 567, 571  
 Beglar Begi 147  
 Begowal 458  
 Behari Mal Bundela, Raja 181  
 Bhag Singh 393, 404, 432, 436, 511,  
 512, 553, 576, 601  
 Bhag Singh Chamyari 447  
 Bhag Singh Dallewala 602  
 Bhag Singh Hallowala 455, 522  
 Bhag Singh of Thanesar 426  
 Bhaga Singh 553  
 Bhagat Singh Karorsinghia 444  
 Bhairon Pant Tantiya 571  
 Bhamma Singh 95  
 Bhanga Singh 448, 565, 570, 572,  
 601, 610, 620, 621  
 Bhangani 387  
 Bhangi Qila 446  
 Bhasin 449  
 Bhawani Das 232  
 Bhawani Singh 547  
 Bhawanigarh 493  
 Bhera 525  
 Bhikari Khan 182, 198  
 Bhikhan Khan 272  
 Bhikhan Shah 271  
 Bhilowal 93  
 Bhim Singh 443  
 Bhim Singh Kamboh, Raja 49  
 Bhiroz 396  
 Bhola Singh 495  
 Bhupinder Singh 507  
 Bibi Rajinder Kaur 605  
 Big Holocaust 276, 397  
 Bijay Singh 253  
 Bilaspur 397  
 Binod Singh, Baba 26, 30, 52  
 Bir Singh 479  
 Biram Dhillon 495  
 Bishan Singh 297  
 Bota Singh 123  
 Brahm Kali Khan 551  
 Brij Raj Dev 459, 460, 483, 485  
 Brown, James 401, 402, 428, 478, 487  
 Browne 613  
 Buddha 479  
 Buddha Dal 96, 280, 285, 400, 414,  
 415, 433  
 Budh Singh 91, 95, 393, 413, 418,  
 586  
 Budh Singh Faizulpuria 500  
 Budh Singh Singhpuria 303  
 Buland Khan 222  
 Buland Shahar 559  
 Buriya Ghat 538, 539  
 Bute Shah 584
- C**
- Calcutta 477  
 Camps 379  
 Carnage of Morinda 284  
 Chahar Mahal 112, 264, 265, 266  
 Chain Singh 286, 489, 502, 558  
 Chamariwala 522  
 Chandausi 429, 538, 563  
 Channu 229  
 Charat Singh Sangatpuria 525  
 Charat Singh Sukarchakiya 138, 162,  
 163, 164, 186, 206, 214, 225,  
 267, 282, 285, 298, 300, 415,  
 445, 448, 454, 455, 480, 481  
 Chaudhari Kala 489  
 Chaudhari Rupa 297  
 Chet Singh 452  
 Chhaja Singh 443  
 Chhajli 491  
 Chhalondi 433  
 Chhota Ghallughara 136, 405  
 Chiniot 525  
 Chunian 519  
 Colonel Kundson 559  
 Colonel Ochterlony 433  
 Cornwallis, Lord 622

**D**

Dadu Dawara 26  
 Daduroi 248  
 Dakni 407  
 Dal Khalsa 169, 205, 268, 285, 387,  
 395, 397, 401, 468, 473, 475,  
 491, 493, 496, 600, 608  
 Dal Singh 466, 586  
 Dal Singh Gill 521  
 Daler Khan Ruhilla 595  
 Dallewalia Misl 404  
 Dallewalias 390  
 Damaji Gaikwar 255  
 Dan Singh 412  
 Darbara Singh 96  
 Dargaha Singh 437  
 Dasaunda Singh Nishanwalia 530  
 Daska 523, 528  
 Dasondha Singh 434, 457  
 Dattaji 593  
 Dattaji Shinde 253  
 Dattaji Sindhia 592  
 Daud Beg Khan 549  
 Daudpotras 446  
 Daulat Rao Sindhia 431, 609, 622  
 Daya Kaur 436  
 Daya Ram, Raja 554  
 Daya Singh 26  
 Dayal Singh 405, 435  
 Deep Singh Shaheed, Baba 96,  
 140, 218, 413, 436, 440  
 Deg 298  
 Delhi 474, 539, 540, 543, 544,  
 578, 614  
 Dera Ghazi Khan 444  
 Dera Ismail Khan 279, 444  
 Des Raj, Bhai 137  
 Desa Singh 448, 449, 484  
 Desu Singh 421, 553, 556  
 Desu Singh Dallewalia 530  
 Desu Singh of Kaithal 422  
 Devi Ditta 504

Devi Talab 404  
 Devji Gavle 570, 571  
 Dhanna Singh Bajwa 525  
 Dhar Rao 503, 564  
 Dharam Singh 30, 440, 520, 550  
 Dharam Singh Dallewalia 529  
 Dharamarth 359  
 Dharamkot 407  
 Dhilu, Raja 577  
 Dhruv Dev 79  
 Didar Singh 525  
 Dila Rai 218, 227  
 Dila Ram 137  
 Dilawar Ali 549  
 Dina Nagar 399, 460  
 Dirba 491  
 Diwan Nanu Mal 503  
 Diwan Singh 445, 499, 553, 556  
 Diwan Singh Lundah Dallewalia 531  
 Doda 522  
 Dodan 491, 494  
 Dogar 396  
 Dulcha Singh 428, 532, 556, 601,  
 602, 603, 618  
 Dulha Singh 435  
 Durjan Sal 252

**E**

East India Company 507, 611  
 Eminabad 583

**F**

Faizullah 448  
 Faizullah Khan, Nawab 620  
 Faizulpuria or Singhpuria Misl 411  
 Faizulpurias 390  
 Farkhandah Bakht, Prince 510  
 Farrukh Siyar 76, 80, 47  
 Fateh Ali Khan 254  
 Fateh Kaur 489, 495  
 Fateh Singh 30, 404, 512  
 Fateh Singh Kanahiya 393



- Farehgarh 407  
 Father Peere 579  
 Fazal Ali Khan 424  
 Firoz Khan Mewati 42  
 Flag 375  
 Forster, George 430  
 four Mahals 173  
 French East India Company 616  
**G**  
 Gajpat Singh, Raja 421, 434, 501,  
 509, 510, 511  
 Gakhar Chief Himmat Khan 453  
 Ganaur 601  
 Ganda Singh Bhangi 289, 392, 447,  
 459, 460, 472  
 Gangaram 547  
 Ganpat Rao Krishan 565  
 Garh Muktesar 565  
 Garhshankar 521  
 Garib Das 499  
 Gazi-ud-Din 201  
 George Thomas 573  
 Ghausgarh 565, 568, 607  
 Ghazi Khan 554  
 Ghazi-ud-Din 207, 208, 209, 253  
 Ghazi-ud-Din Nagar 398  
 Ghaziabad 424  
 Gheba 582  
 Ghulam Hussain, Sayyad 246  
 Ghulam Muhammad Pirzada, Shah  
 183  
 Ghulam Muhiy-ud-Din Khan 458  
 Ghulam Qadir, Khan, Ruhilla 431,  
 565, 566, 568, 580, 605, 606,  
 607  
 Ghumand Chand Katoch, Raja 241,  
 264, 268  
 Ghuram 285, 606  
 Gilwali 444  
 Gobind Singh, Guru 387, 443  
 Gogera 524  
 Goindwal 397  
 Gole Khan 397  
 Gopal Ganesh Barve 255  
 Gopal Rao Barve 592  
 Gopal Rao Raghunath 609  
 Gopal Singh 393  
 Gopal Singh, Raja 503  
 Gosain Rupanand 542  
 Gosains 506  
 Guerilla Area 378  
 Gujjar Singh 226, 265, 297, 303,  
 344, 450, 452, 453, 454, 455,  
 486, 523, 591  
 Gujjar Singh Bhangi 297, 482, 533  
 Gujrat 523, 583, 584  
 Gulab Kali 608  
 Gulab Rai 82  
 Gulab Rais 84  
 Gulab Singh 45, 405, 442, 449  
 Gulab Singh Bhangi 584  
 Gulab Singh Khaira 518, 526  
 Gulab Singh Khattar 479  
 Gulaba Khatri 404  
 Gulsher Khan 610  
 Gurbakhsh Rai 83  
 Gurbakhsh Singh 89, 192, 393,  
 435, 440, 443, 450, 474, 486,  
 493, 521, 522, 538, 556  
 Gurbakhsh Singh Ambala 499  
 Gurbakhsh Singh Kaleke 489  
 Gurbakhsh Singh Roranwala 95, 445  
 Gurbakhsh Singh Shaheed 531  
 Gurdas Nangal 49  
 Gurdial Singh Dallewala 138  
 Gurdit Singh 450, 499, 514, 557,  
 563, 564, 606, 607, 610  
 Gurdit Singh Dallewalia 531  
 Gurdit Singh Ladwa 564  
 Gurditta Mal 394  
 Gurmata 134, 332, 334, 341, 342  
 Guru Arjan Dev 438, 578  
 Guru Harkishan Sahi' 426

**H**

- Hafiz Ali Khan, Sayyad 49  
 Hafiz Rahmat Khan 256  
 Haidri Flag 92  
 Haji Atai Khan 439  
 Hakikat Singh Kanhiya 347, 422,  
 446, 448, 456, 457, 460, 486,  
 503, 504, 517  
 Hamid Khan 283  
 Hamir Singh 393, 413, 510, 514, 515,  
 544  
 Hansi 474  
 Hanway, Jones 111  
 Har Lal 223  
 Har Singh 137  
 Hargobindpur 473  
 Hari Mandir 163, 275  
 Hari Ram 137  
 Hari Singh Bhangi 142, 186, 206, 225,  
 265, 400, 444, 445, 591  
 Hari Singh Dallewalia 533  
 Hari Singh Hazuri, Bhai 413  
 Haryana 521  
 Harun Khan 177  
 Hasan Abdal 583  
 Hastings, Warren 401, 562, 615  
 Hathi Singh 83  
 Hathkardari 361  
 Hayat Khan 488  
 Hayat Ullah Khan 113, 128  
 Hazarat Begam 212  
 Himmat Khan 554  
 Himmat Singh, Prince 497, 498, 500  
 Hindalis 83  
 Hira Mal, Diwan 241  
 Hira Singh 300, 464, 519  
 Hissar 474  
 Hoshiarpur 396  
 Hujra Shah Muqim 101  
 Hussan Khan 489

**I**

- Ibrahim Khan Gardi 254, 256, 257,  
 259  
 Imad-ul-Mulk 185, 201, 210  
 Inayat Khan 92, 491, 493  
 Intazam-ud-Daula 198, 210  
 Isa Khan 489  
 Isa Khan Munj 76  
 Isa Khel 484  
 Ishwari Singh, Raja 154, 157  
 Izzat Baksh 241

**J**

- Jahan Khan, 179, 201, 213, 214, 216,  
 220, 222, 227, 238, 247, 284,  
 286, 300, 301, 396, 439, 498,  
 541, 591, 594  
 Jahan Khan Farkhanda Bakht,  
 Mirza 553  
 Jahan Shah Farkhandah Baksh,  
 Mirza 501  
 Jahandar Shah 47, 605, 616  
 Jahangir 578  
 Jai Ram Missar 484  
 Jai Singh Kanhiya 204, 346, 390, 399,  
 422, 446, 456, 457, 459, 460,  
 461, 463, 472, 473, 475, 478,  
 503, 517, 571, 599, 601, 615  
 Jai Singh Nishanwalia 532  
 Jai Singh, Raja 426  
 Jai Singhpura 421, 546  
 Jaimal Shah 440  
 Jaimal Singh 517  
 Jaipal Singh 405  
 Jalal Khan 37  
 Jalalabad 544  
 Jalhe Khan 150, 162  
 Jam-i-Jahan Numa 591  
 Jamal Khan 414  
 Jamal-ud-Din, Khan/Sayyad 152  
 James Anderson, Lt. Col. 618

- Jamil-ud-Din, Khan/Sayyad 182, 202, 205, 208
- Jammu 459, 485
- Jan Khan, Mirza 248
- Jangbaz Khan 224
- Jankoji 247
- Jankoji Shinde 252
- Jankoji Sindhia 247
- Jaspat Rai, Diwan 136
- Jassa Singh Ahluwalia 138, 139, 163, 186, 187, 221, 235, 268, 270, 285, 332, 387, 393, 394, 400, 401, 402, 408, 422, 424, 448, 457, 468, 478, 523, 530, 538, 556, 560, 580, 591, 596, 613
- Jassa Singh Binod 554
- Jassa Singh Ramgarhia/Thoka 187, 192, 204, 206, 225, 399, 404, 413, 422, 425, 447, 457, 460, 467, 472, 476, 477, 562, 563, 584, 591, 614, 622
- Jaswant Rao Holkar 512
- Jaswant Singh 515
- Jawahar Mal, Chaudhari 137
- Jawahar Singh 539, 540, 597
- Jayappa Sindhia 186
- Jehlum 584
- Jhanda Singh Bhangi 186, 226, 283, 289, 392, 399, 445, 446, 456, 483, 520, 591
- Jhang 396
- Jind State 508
- Jiva Dada Bakhshi 568, 608
- Jiwan Singh 456
- Jiwan Singh Ghuman 522
- Jiwan Singh Randhawa 492
- Jodh Singh 433, 478, 518, 586
- Jodh Singh Kalsia 610
- Jodh Singh Karorsinghia 531
- Jodh Singh of Wazirabad 422
- John Shore, Sir 621
- K**
- Kabuli Mall 297
- Kahan Singh 26
- Kahna Kachha 91, 390
- Kahna Mal 495
- Kahnuwan 376
- Kairana 407
- Kalayan Singh 615
- Kamar Singh 464
- Kambli 364
- Kandhla 407
- Kanganpur 519
- Kangra 458
- Kanhiya Misl 456
- Kanwar Partap Singh 512
- Kanwar Singh 533
- Kapur Singh, Nawab 86, 93, 95, 101, 103, 138, 139, 169, 190, 393, 394, 405, 412, 413, 414, 416, 417, 435, 456
- Kapuri 28
- Kar Ullah Khan 454
- Karam Singh 30, 95, 219, 413, 440, 441, 442, 492, 507, 526, 538, 602, 606, 610, 614, 615
- Karam Singh Chhinna 526
- Karam Singh Dula 525
- Karam Singh Gill 523
- Karam Singh Mananwala 526
- Karam Singh Nirmala 426, 499, 531, 553, 556, 568, 570, 610
- Karam Singh of Shahbad 502
- Karam Singh Shaheed 530, 544
- Kariala 444
- Karimdad Khan 264
- Karor Singh 186, 419
- Karor Singhia Misl 419
- Karora Singh 162
- Kartarpur 213
- Kashi Rao 608
- Kashmiri 495

- Kashmiri Mal 137  
 Kasur 283, 394, 457, 585  
 Kathgarh 397, 520  
 Kathunangal 527  
 Kaur Singh 407  
 Kaur Singh Dallewalia 529  
 Kaura Mal, Diwan 129, 137, 142,  
 174, 179, 180, 182, 188, 189,  
 190, 235, 236, 469  
 Khadur 526  
 Khalil Beg 423  
 Khalsa 434  
 Khalsai 602  
 Khan, Dilawar 157  
 Khan, Jahan 239  
 Khan, Nasir 104  
 Khanjar Khan 181  
 Khanjar Khan Kabuli 181  
 Khazana-i-Amira 591  
 Khem Karan 437  
 Khem Singh 440  
 Khuda Wirdi Beg 40  
 Khudal 494  
 Khunda 526  
 Khush Durrani, Mir 250  
 Khush-Faham, Mian 199  
 Khushal Khan Khatak 247  
 Khushal Singh 162, 417, 520, 605  
 Khushal Singh Singhpuria 400, 426,  
 503, 533  
 Khwaja Mirza 204  
 Khwaja Saeed 248  
 Kifayat Khan 107  
 Kirpa Rai, Baba 137  
 Kirpal, Shiv Singh 442  
 Kishan Singh Mansahia 509  
 Komalia 464  
 Kot Kapura 500  
 Kot Khwaja Sayyad 444  
 Kulu 479  
 Kumbh Fair 506  
 Kunjah Mal 137  
 Kunjpura 253, 398, 510, 564, 595,  
 608  
 Kurus 577  
 Kutana Ghat 407, 600
- L**
- Lachhman Rao 511  
 Lahore 288, 527, 528  
 Lakh Mir Singh 89  
 Lakhi Jungle 376  
 Lakhi Shah 426  
 Lakhpat Rai, Diwan 129, 138, 160,  
 162, 172, 232, 402, 413, 414,  
 429, 612, 613  
 Lakhwa Dada 572  
 Lal Singh 434, 436, 503, 519, 521,  
 610  
 Laliana 397  
 Land Tenure 357  
 Langha Laeli 400  
 Latafat Ali Khan 548  
 Lehna Singh 225, 265, 297, 300,  
 303, 402, 446, 448, 450, 528,  
 584, 591  
 Lohgarh 48  
 Lucknow 477
- M**
- Macpherson 603  
 Madho Rao 572  
 Madho Rao Phalke 570  
 Madho Singh 253, 597  
 Mahabhat, Mian 199  
 Mahadji Sindhia 409, 430, 435, 504,  
 563, 564, 570, 600, 603, 606,  
 609, 611, 616, 617  
 Mahan Singh 449, 460, 461, 463,  
 483, 484, 485, 487  
 Mahant Jit Mal 26  
 Maharaj Singh 297  
 Maharaja Ala Singh 497  
 Maharaja Ranjit Singh 418

- Maharaja Sahib Singh 605  
 Mahatpur 407  
 Mahendar Singh, Maharaja 443  
 Mahmud Buti 181, 236  
 Mahmud, Prince 198, 582  
 Mai Desan 457  
 Maidanpur 609  
 Majha Singh 526  
 Majnu ka Tilla 425, 427  
 Makhad 528  
 Malerkotla 284  
 Malhar Rao Holkar 186, 223, 224,  
 246, 247, 597  
 Mali Singh, Bhai 27, 89, 283, 473  
 Malkaganj 580  
 Malla Singh 443  
 Mallu Khan 579  
 Man Singh 440  
 Mani Singh, Bhai 97, 98, 99, 437  
 Manimajra 499  
 Mansukh Rai 547  
 Manupur 155, 173, 174  
 Massa Rangar 121  
 Masur Khan 454  
 Mata Sahib Kaur 426  
 Mata Sundri 83, 426  
 Mathan Singh 533  
 Meerut 407  
 Mehar Singh Nishanwalia 534  
 Mehdi Ali Khan 175, 181  
 Mehraj 391, 488  
 Mehtab Kaur 463  
 Mehtab Singh 121, 414, 456, 526, 572  
 Mihan Singh 443  
 Milkha Singh 524, 584, 585  
 Mir Aman Ullah Khan 181  
 Mir Baqi 128  
 Mir Mannu 172, 175, 183, 187, 188,  
 190, 389, 469  
 Mir Moman Khan 181  
 Mir Mumin 129  
 Mir Qasim 542  
 Mirza Jan Khan, Khwaja 179, 221,  
 227, 240, 246, 247  
 Mirza, Khwaja Khan 200  
 Mirza Muhammad Anwar 241  
 Mirza Shikoh 424  
 Mirza Shikoh, Prince 559, 580  
 Miskin 439  
 Misl Polity 327  
 Misl. Shuja Khan 446  
 Misldari 361, 403  
 Misldars 348  
 Mit Singh Dallewalia 162, 532  
 Mohammad Amin Khan, Nawab 55  
 Mohammad Bakhsh 100, 102  
 Mohammad Daim, Sheikh 49  
 Mohammad Hashim Afridi 153  
 Mohammad Khan, Amir 594  
 Mohammad Khan, Mir 265  
 Mohammad Khan Turkoman 103  
 Mohammad Shah 103, 104, 107,  
 110, 128, 153, 154  
 Mohammad Taqi Khan Sherazi 40,  
 157  
 Mohan 491  
 Mohan Singh Nishanwalia 555  
 Mohar Singh Nishanwalia 422,  
 435, 522, 601, 602  
 Mohkam Chand 435  
 Mohkam Singh 87  
 Moman Khan 181  
 Momin Khan, Mir 152, 162, 181,  
 198, 204  
 Moonak 500  
 Moti Bagh 427  
 Mufti Abdullah Peshawari 183  
 Mughlani Begam 198, 202, 208, 211,  
 215, 226, 238  
 Muhammad Amin Abdul-Kasan  
 Gulistani 145  
 Muhammad Amin Khan Bhatti 494

- Muhammad Ashiq, Mian 297  
 Muhammad Khan Kashmiri 210  
 Muhammad Naeem Khan 130  
 Muhammad Shafi 599  
 Muhammad Shah 212  
 Muhammad Yar Khan 465  
 Muhammad Zaman 40  
 Muhammad Zei 214  
 Muin Khan 181, 191  
 Muin-ul-Mulk 172, 173, 395, 588  
 Mukhlisgarh 36, 46  
 Multan 444, 585  
 Mumīn Khan 117, 129  
 Munim Khan 44  
 Munir-ud-Daula 279  
 Munj Rajputs 407  
 Muqarrab Khan 453  
 Murad Begam 198  
 Murad Khan 279  
 Muradabad 563  
 Muraliwala 521  
 Muran Bakhsh Bhatti 241  
 Murtaza Khan Baraich 272  
 Murtza Khan 92  
 Musa Beg Lechani 40  
 Musa Khel 484  
 Muzaffar Nagar 620  
 Muzaffargarh 444  
 Muzaffarnagar 605  
 Muzaffer Khan 449
- N**
- Nadir Shah 103, 104, 106, 108, 109,  
 113, 128, 130, 144, 212, 230,  
 405, 415  
 Nagahia 492  
 Nahar Singh 519, 532, 586, 597  
 Najaf Khan 501, 546, 548, 549, 550,  
 551, 552, 555, 556, 557, 559,  
 561, 579  
 Najaf Khan, Mirza 423, 599  
 Najaf Quli Khan 562, 580, 600  
 Najib, Najib-ud-Daula, Ruhilla 207,  
 223, 249, 256, 257, 279, 302,  
 498, 509, 538, 540, 541, 543,  
 546, 550, 552, 578, 579, 593,  
 596, 598, 599  
 Nakaī Misl 464  
 Nalagarh 397  
 Nana Rao 505, 610  
 Nanakmata 621  
 Nanautah 544  
 Nand Singh 241, 392, 472  
 Nanu Mal, Diwan 501, 503, 504,  
 544, 566, 605, 608  
 Nar Singh 522, 525  
 Naraingarh 396, 442  
 Naranjania, Bhagat 121  
 Narinder Singh 507  
 Naro Shankar 250, 593  
 Narsoji Pandit 247  
 Naseem Khan 238  
 Naseer Khan 593  
 Nasir Ali 222  
 Nasir Khan, Nawab 104, 105, 106,  
 147, 148, 156, 158, 173, 250  
 Nasrulla 112  
 Natha Singh 522  
 Nathu Shah, Mir 297  
 Nawal Singh 542  
 Nea Matullah Khan, Mir 440  
 Nehmat Khan, Mir 236  
 Neki Singh 587  
 Niamat Khan, Mir 181, 182  
 Niaz Khan, Sayyad 111  
 Nidhan Singh 232  
 Nidhan Singh Hattu 528  
 Nidhan Singh Randhawa 241, 275  
 Nigahiya Singh 30  
 Nimat Khan, Mir 152  
 Niranjani Sect 270  
 Niranjanias 83  
 Nizam 110  
 Nizam-ud-Din, Shah 580, 585



Nizam-ud-Din, Shaikh 303  
 Nizam-ul-Mulik 104  
 Nodh Singh 480  
 Nodh Singh Karor Singhia 531  
 Nodh Singh Nishanwala 529  
 Nodh Singh Bhangi 447  
 Nur Muhammad, Qazi 398, 458, 481  
 Nur-ud-Din, Khan, Bemezei 246,  
 247, 267, 276, 539  
 Nur-ud-Din Kot 301  
 Nurpur 462  
 Nypal 396

**O**

Ochtorlony 436  
 Okhlaghat 579  
 Otto, Edward 620  
 Otto Ives 620

**P**

Pahar Ganj 421, 579  
 Pahara Mal 492  
 Pahuwind 526  
 Panchayat 370  
 Panipat 42  
 Pari Mahal 204  
 Partap Singh 600  
 Pasand Khan, Shah 146, 256  
 Pasrur 527  
 Pathankot 518, 527  
 Patiala 431, 528, 608  
 Pattidari 360  
 Peshawar 582, 583  
 Phagwara 527  
 Phillaur 519, 527  
 Phul 488  
 Phulkian Misl 390, 413  
 Pind Dadan Khan 583  
 Pindi Bhattian 484  
 Pir Mohammad, Mullah 92  
 Pir Muhammad 484  
 Pir Muhammad Khan Chatha 447

Pothohar 582  
 Prem Singh 437  
 Prince Jiwan Bakht 595  
 Prithviraj 577  
 Punjab Singh 534

**Q**

Qadam-ud-Din 28  
 Qadir Bakhsh 398  
 Qadir Bakhsh, Hafiz 297  
 Qaim Ali Khan 182  
 Qalandar Beg Khan 207, 208  
 Qamar Singh 524  
 Qamar-ud-Din, Khan 50, 128, 130,  
 141, 160, 198, 232  
 Qasim Khan 200, 204, 272, 286  
 Qila Bhangian 445  
 Qila Gujjar Singh 455  
 Qila Sobha Singh 347  
 Qutab Shah 253, 254, 494  
 Qutba 273

**R**

Radaur 423  
 Rae Singh 538  
 Raghbir Singh 513  
 Raghunath Rao 223, 240, 246, 247,  
 589, 592, 593  
 Rahimdad Khan Ruhilla 544, 545  
 Rahmat Khan Rohilla 300  
 Rahmat Khan Waraich, Chaudhari  
 241  
 Rahmat Ullah Beg 300  
 Rahon 410, 520  
 Rai Hafiz 492  
 Rai Ibrahim 241  
 Rai Singh Bhangra 529, 601, 610,  
 621  
 Rai Singh Bhangi 444, 531, 545  
 Rai Singh Karor Singhia 529  
 Rai Singh of Buriya 553  
 Raja Amar Singh 409, 528

- Raja Bhumia Singh 608  
 Raja Rai Singh 506  
 Raja Sahib Singh 503  
 Raja Sansi 480  
 Rajinder Kaur, Rani 503, 504, 569  
 Rakabganj 579  
 Rakhi 205, 304, 364, 365, 403, 565,  
 603, 617  
 Ram Kaur 433  
 Ram Singh 26, 27, 30, 440, 584, 585  
 Rama 489, 490  
 Ramgarh 469  
 Ramgarhia Misl 467  
 Ramji Mal 87  
 Rane Khan 431, 504, 569, 607, 608  
 Rang Mahal 204  
 Rani Daya Kaur 436  
 Rani Sada Kaur 586  
 Ranjit Dev, Raja 214, 241, 447, 459,  
 460, 483  
 Ranjit Singh 410, 411, 413, 415,  
 433, 435, 436, 442, 449, 452,  
 487, 507, 542, 583, 584,  
 585, 586  
 Rao Dhiraj 424  
 Rasul Nagar 484  
 Ratan Singh 542  
 Rattan Kaur 411<sup>1</sup>  
 Ravaji 592  
 Ravloji Sindhia 570  
 Rawalpindi 303, 524  
 Red Fort 401  
 Renko Anaji 592  
 Rohtas 482, 582  
 Rup Kaur 433  
 Rustam Khan 203, 264
- S**
- Saadat Khan Afridi 104, 158, 222,  
 266, 268, 279  
 Saadat Yar Beg 301  
 Sabaji Patil 250, 593, 594  
 Sabaji Patil 248  
 Sabaji Sindhia 592  
 Sabzi Mandi 539  
 Sack of Kasur 281  
 Sada Kaur 457, 462, 463, 476, 486  
 Sada Shiv Dinkar 600  
 Sada Singh 422, 428, 555, 556  
 Sadar Singh 393  
 Sadashiv Bhau 253, 255, 257  
 Sadhaura 28  
 Sadiq Beg 208, 223, 242, 494  
 Sadiq Beg Khan 202, 237, 242  
 Sadiq Khan Afridi 265, 266  
 Saeed Khan 248  
 Safdar Jang 156, 158, 160, 173, 180,  
 198  
 Sahaj Singh 527  
 Saharanpur 37, 596, 605, 620  
 Sahib Kaur, Rani 505, 506, 511, 609  
 Sahib Rai 90  
 Sahib Rai Sandhu 120  
 Sahib Singh 400, 402, 426,  
 445, 454, 455, 484, 486, 500,  
 502, 504, 522, 527, 531, 556,  
 584, 585, 586  
 Sahib Singh Khondah 553  
 Sahib Singh Kror Singhia 583  
 Sahib Singh of Patiala 609  
 Sahib Singh, Raja 605, 609  
 Sahiwal 484  
 Said-ud-Din 211  
 Saif Ali Khan 459  
 Sainapat, Kavi 387  
 Sakha Dev 592  
 Salabat Khan, Sayyad 157  
 Salaudi 285  
 Saleh Khan 248  
 Saliala 397  
 Salimgarh 600  
 Samad Khan 414  
 Samana 493

- Samru 544  
 Sanaur 493  
 Sangat Singh 512  
 Sangats 370  
 Sanghurwala 478  
 Sansar Chand Katoch 459, 462, 475  
 Sant Singh 440  
 Sanwal Singh 527  
 Sarae Lashkari Khan 434  
 Sarai Badli 155  
 Sarai Balkhian 179  
 Sarai Kali 585  
 Sarbat Khalsa 281, 331, 332, 333,  
 334, 342, 405  
 Sarbuland Khan 264, 265, 266, 288,  
 482, 594  
 Sardar Khan 34  
 Sardars 348  
 Sardul Singh 497, 525  
 Sarfraz Khan 217, 589  
 Sarhali 432  
 Sarjan Singh 532  
 Sarup Singh 513  
 Saundha Singh 500  
 Saurian 518  
 Sawan Singh 533  
 Sayyad Inayat 40  
 Sayyadwala 464  
 Sayyed Ali Khan 554  
 Sayyed Hasan Khan 544  
 Sekandar Singh 393  
 Seva Singh 619  
 Shafi Khan, Mirza 423, 501, 510, 556,  
 557, 558, 560  
 Shafi's Campaign 555  
 Shah Alam 511, 546, 597, 598  
 Shah Alam II 258, 279, 563, 573,  
 582, 595, 614, 616  
 Shah, Bahadur 43  
 Shah Jahan II 594  
 Shah Kalabali, Darvesh 151  
 Shah Nawaz Khan 128, 129, 131,  
 132, 134, 141, 143, 148, 149,  
 150, 151, 152, 174, 189, 232,  
 233  
 Shah Pasand Khan 256  
 Shah Sadullah 40  
 Shah Wali Khan, Wazir 146, 183, 209,  
 251, 255, 256, 257, 274, 299,  
 302  
 Shah Zaman 451, 506, 582, 622  
 Shahanchi Basi 584  
 Shahbaz Singh 123  
 Shahdad Khan 77  
 Shahdara 544  
 Shaheedi Misl 436  
 Shahid Ganj 119  
 Shahjahanabad 579  
 Shahzadpur 441  
 Sham Chaurasi 419  
 Sham Singh 30, 162, 538  
 Shambhu Nath 621  
 Shamli 407, 540, 569, 574  
 Shams Khan 39  
 Sheikhpura 522, 527  
 Sher Muhammad, Nawab 488  
 Sher Singh 437  
 Sher Singh Bhangi 506  
 Sheron 491  
 Shikhpura 479  
 Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak  
 Committee 334  
 Shuja-ud-Daula 257, 258, 595  
 Sialba 408, 499  
 Sialkot 444, 522, 523, 584  
 Siege-craft 378  
 Sir John Cumming, Col. 617, 619  
 Sirhind 29, 30, 302, 396, 397, 398,  
 413, 496, 498  
 Sobha Singh 303, 450, 451, 452,  
 489, 492, 527  
 Sohrab Khan 49  
 Sondha Singh 586

- Sri Akal Takhat Sahib 281, 387, 406  
 Sri Hargobindpur 584  
 Sri Hari Mandir Sahib 406, 438, 439  
 Sri Niwas, Lala 230  
 Stuart, Colonel 619, 621  
 Subeg Singh 123, 412  
 Sucha Singh 556  
 Sudh Singh 393, 437  
 Sudh Singh Bajwa 529  
 Sudh Singh Dodia 445  
 Sukarchakia 475  
 Sukarchakia Misl 390, 392, 479  
 Sukh Jiwan, Raja 177  
 Sukha Singh Mari Kambo 138, 139,  
 162, 453, 455  
 Sukhchain Singh 500, 508  
 Sulaiman Khan 454  
 Sultan Mukarram Khan 454  
 Sultanpur 397  
 Sunder Chak 447  
 Suraj Mal Jat 208  
 Surat Singh 137  
 Surat Singh, Diwan 264, 297  
 Surjan Singh Dallewalia 529
- T**
- Tabedari 361  
 Tahmas Khan Miskin 264  
 Taj Muhammad Khan 554  
 Takhat Mal 479  
 Talwan 419  
 Talwandi 397  
 Taqi Khan Sherazi 147  
 Taqqi Mohammad 92  
 Tara Singh, Bhai 89, 90, 91, 400,  
 406, 409, 447, 456, 519, 520,  
 527, 571, 576, 583  
 Tara Singh Ghaiba 285, 406, 407,  
 408, 411, 421, 422, 426, 500,  
 533, 538, 545, 572, 591, 608  
 Tara Singh Kakar 555  
 Tara Singh Kakar Dallewalia 530  
 Tara Singh Kakash 422  
 Tara Singh Kanhiya 392  
 Tara Singh Pathankotia 527  
 Tara Singh Sialkotia 445  
 Taragarh 527  
 Taraori 251  
 Tarikh-i-Alamgir Sani 246  
 Tarn Taran 397  
 Taru Singh, Bhai 124  
 Taruna 285  
 Taruna Dal 96, 280, 287, 413, 415,  
 433, 540  
 Tatar Khan 414  
 Tayar Beg 92  
 Tehal Singh Chhachi 528  
 Tehmasap Khan Miskin 199  
 Teliwara 426  
 Thaneswar 224  
 Thomas, George 431, 505, 574  
 Tilok Singh 27  
 Tiloka 490  
 Timur Shah/Khan 207, 213, 216,  
 217, 224, 249, 372, 396, 438,  
 582, 588, 594  
 Tis Hazari 426  
 Tosham 474  
 Trilok Singh 422  
 Tukoji 593  
 Tukoji Holkar 247, 592, 593
- U**
- Ubaid Khan, Khwaja 265, 267, 268,  
 279, 287, 444, 471  
 Umda Begam 201  
 Usman Khan 281, 407, 445
- V**
- Veerowal 444  
 Vilayat Khan 491  
 Vir Bhan 433  
 Vishwas Rao 255

## W

- Wadala 526  
 Wadhag Singh 438  
 Wadda Ghallughara 270, 397, 470,  
 481, 596  
 Wafadar Khan, Wazir 586  
 Walayat Khan 493  
 Wali Ullah, Shah 249, 250  
 Wazir Imad-ul-Mulk Ghazi-ud-  
 Din 247  
 Wazir Khan 31  
 Wazir Qamar-ud-Din Khan 154,  
 234  
 Wazirabad 521  
 William, G.R.C. 195

## Y

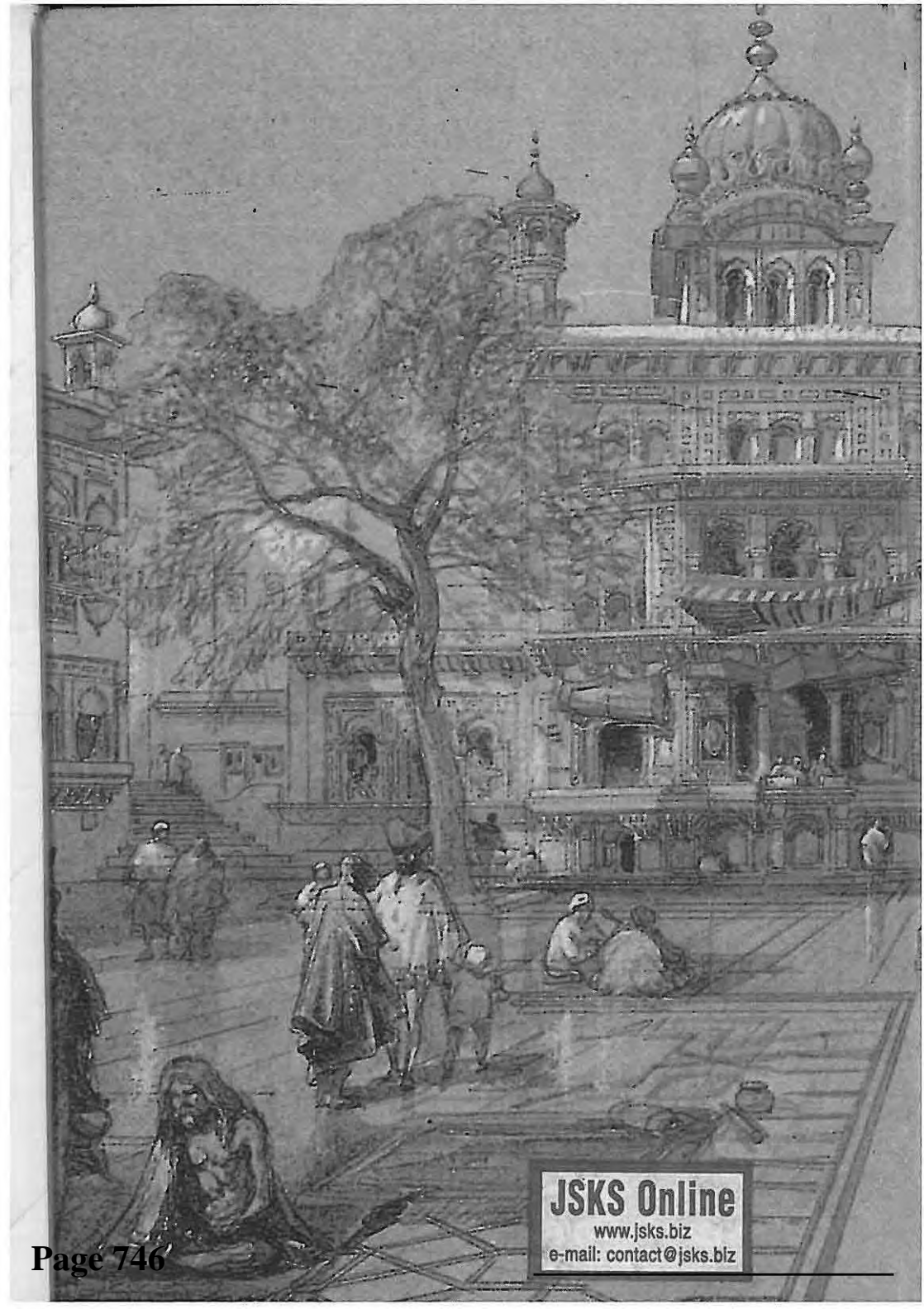
- Yahiya Khan 128, 129, 130, 132,  
 134, 140, 141, 152, 232, 415  
 Yakub Ali Khan 551  
 Yakub Khan 251, 510

## Z

- Zabardast Khan 151  
 Zabita Khan 302, 407, 441, 542,  
 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 551,  
 554, 557, 579, 614  
 Zafar Jang Bahadur 238  
 Zafarwal 522  
 Zafaryab Khan 475, 614  
 Zahad Khan 189  
 Zahura 478  
 Zain Khan 267, 271, 272, 273, 277,  
 279, 285, 342, 496, 596  
 Zain-ul-Abidin, Mirza 560, 561, 562,  
 599  
 Zakariya Khan 50, 87, 88, 100,  
 102, 105, 106, 113, 115, 117,  
 118, 125, 128, 132, 147, 230,  
 231, 412, 413, 414, 443, 491  
 Zaman, Shah 583  
 Zamzama 298, 446  
 Zulfiqar Jang 156, 158  
 Zulfiqar Khan 75







**JSKS Online**  
www.jsks.biz  
e-mail: contact@jsks.biz